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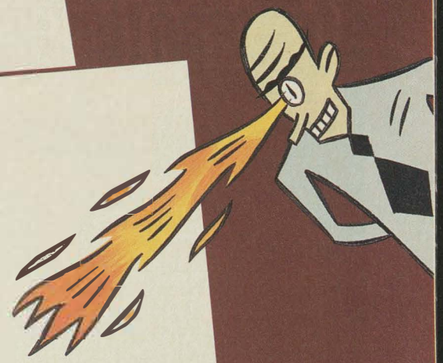
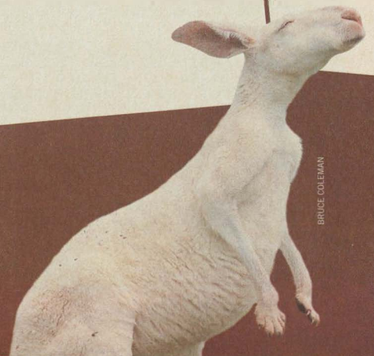


ABOVE AND LEFT: JASON FORD



BRUCE COLEMAN

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editorial

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BUSINESS AS UNUSUAL

As we write, several ideas planned for years are coming to fruition. First, on Monday 16 June, a plaque was installed on 39 Marchmont Street, Bloomsbury in London, where Charles Fort lived between 1921 and 1928 so that he could work in the British Museum Library nearby. Second, our campaign to create the Charles Fort Institute (CFI) is at last publicly underway. The CFI aims to be the world's leading resource for scholarship and research into Fortean matters and will comprise a museum, archive and reference library with a serious internet presence. It is an ambitious project which will take time and a great deal of donated money. We'll have more news of its progress later, but for now those of you with web-browsers can learn more about it at **www.forteana.org**

REX PHOTOS

MARKER: *Fortean Times* Editor Bob Rickard hands over the plaque to Nina Parmar in Marchmont Street

As we leave our 100th issue behind us and steam into the future, the unstinting flow of strange stories never ceases to amaze us. As usual, the world provides a rich diet of oddity and our job as cosmic scribes will continue long after the current mass media mania for all things paranormal and extraterrestrial has subsided.

Judging from the quantity of clippings from local newspapers up and down the country arriving at Fortean Towers, the giant black cats prowling around Britain continue to be an important and widespread mystery. Our annual summary appears on page 23. We have a generous helping of weirdness from Africa, with the story of the teleporting boy of the Ivory Coast (page 20) and assorted tales from the pages of that fine Ugandan paper, *The Monitor* of Kampala (page 11).

Also in this issue, Allen Abel tests the commonly experienced, but little researched feeling of being stared at, based on experiments by naturalist Dr Rupert Sheldrake – see page 36. You can try these tests at home, school or while commuting to the office. If you send a record of your results to Dr Sheldrake, they could lead to new understanding of how we model the world in our minds.

Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince take on the myth-makers of Rennes-le-Chateau – on page 28 – in an attempt to clear the way for their own interpretation of the spiritual mystery of the place.

A word of thanks to our dedicated clipsters round the world: your work is greatly appreciated and we wish we could write to all of you individually to express our thanks. However, it's all we can do to surf the tidal wave of data, postal and electronic, without drowning. As we have done for the past 24 years, we'll sift this vast mass to the best of our abilities and provide you with well referenced and concise reports from the frontiers of the probable.

Paul Sieveking

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'FORTEAN'?

CHARLES HOY FORT
(1874–1932)

FORTEAN TIMES is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort. Throughout his life, Fort was sceptical about scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data was ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away (which is quite different from explaining a thing).

Fort, born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

His dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate state between extremes. He had ideas of the universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena. He coined the term 'teleportation' and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

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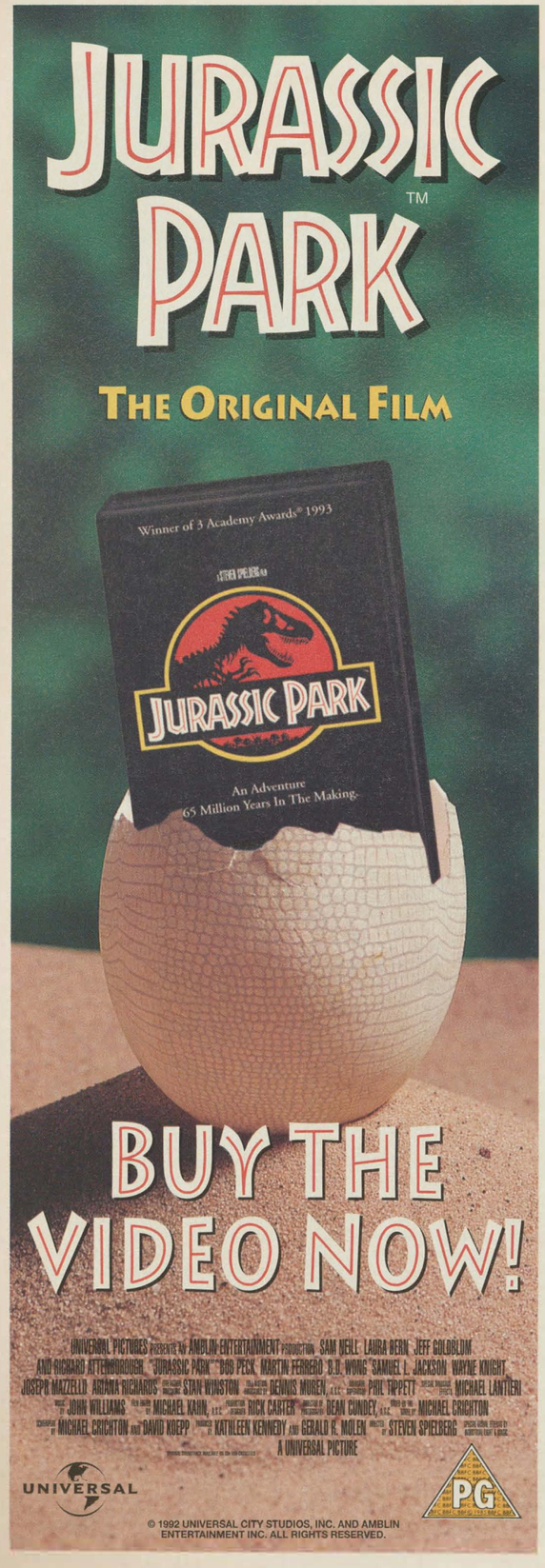

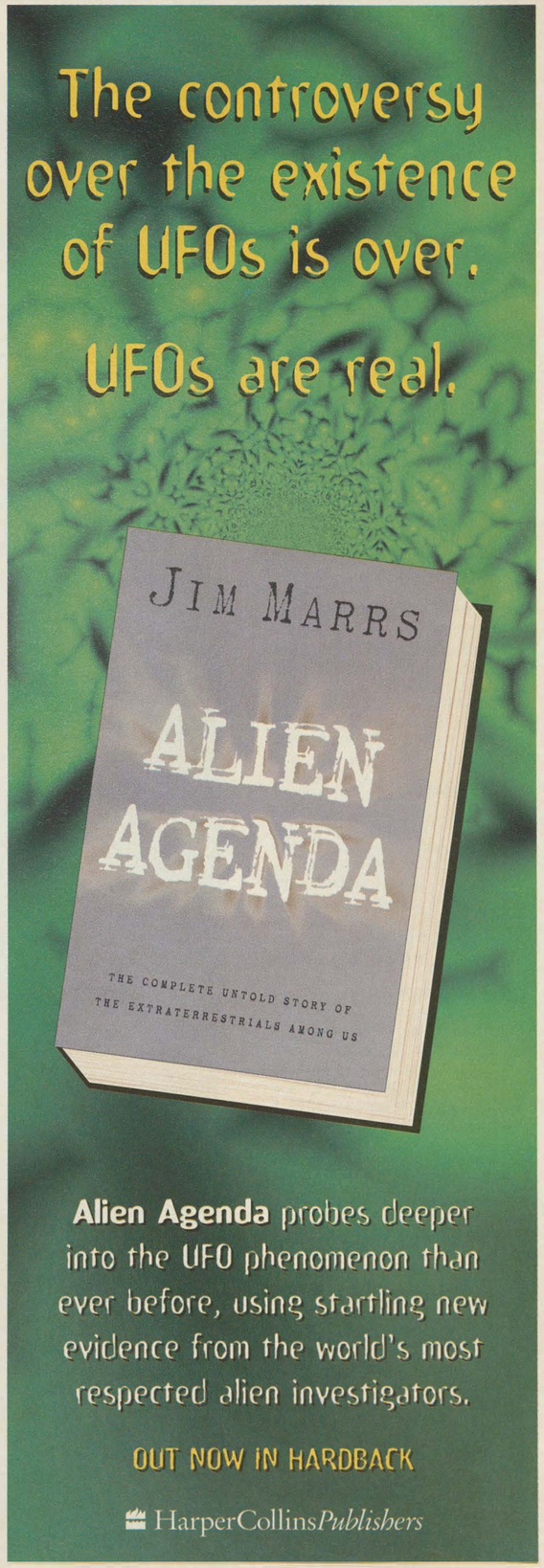

sidelines

HOT CHICK: An 83-year-old Palm Springs woman suffered severe burns over 60 per cent of her body on 22 March, although firefighters couldn't explain how she was injured: was it perhaps a case of Spontaneous Human Combustion? There were no signs of a fire in her room at 2,300 Birdie Way. She was taken to the San Bernadino Burn Center. At the time of going to press her condition was not known. *Press Enterprise (CA?), 23 Mar 1997.*

DRAGON AWAKES AND SHAKES: Vietnamese scientists are investigating reports of land having sunk by up to 10ft (3m) near the Ham Rong (Dragon's Mouth) volcano, which has been extinct for about 1,000 years. Several thousand square metres of land in the central highland province of Gia Lai used for coffee crops are affected. The ground surrounding the sunken patches, some of which were several miles apart, was covered by small cracks. The ground began sinking during last year's rainy season, between September and November. Movement of underground gases was being investigated as a possible cause. Locals say the dragon is moving its tail in anger. *[R] 21 Feb 1997.*

DEEP DEFORESTATION: Ten acres of woodland and fields between Macianarotta and Terranuova Bracciolini outside the Tuscan town of Arezzo collapsed into a 50ft (15m)-deep pit which opened then disappeared overnight. A shepherd said he heard "loud thumps and then a deafening boom". No injuries were reported. *D.Telegraph, 6 May 1997.*

NEW SKY DANGER: A jet aircraft might have been almost knocked out of the sky by a previously unknown form of air turbulence. In December 1992, an engine was torn off a DC-8 jet 32,500 ft (9,900m) over the Rocky Mountains. Investigators blamed a "breaking" wave of air, a recognised hazard in mountainous regions; but calculations by Terry Clark of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, revealed a new type of turbulence – a region of highly variable wind speed, shaped like an elongated pancake some 19 miles (30km) long and anything up to 2.5 miles (4km) wide. *[PA] 17 April 1997.*

DEAD END: In April, Mao Tse-tung's mausoleum in Tiananmen Square closed for repairs that are predicted to take at least eight months. But will it reopen? There is a strong *feng shui* reason for removing it, as it blocks the *qi* (roughly, 'life force') that extends in a line from the ancient home of the emperors in the Forbidden City through a series of southern gates into the heart of China. *Observer, 6 April 1997.*

THE BRISTOL EVENING POST

Fatter pussycat can't kill, kill

AT 24LB (11KG), Stibby is too heavy to hunt. Yet he only eats a tin of food a day, plus biscuits. Owners Carol and Viv Parslow, of Eastville, Bristol, have had the 12-year-old cat since he was a kitten. "He got this big when he was young," said Carol, "and nothing we've tried to get his weight down has worked. Floyd [their other cat] eats the same and only weighs 8lb (3.6kg)."

A six-year-old tabby called Thomas, belonging to Sarah Angell of Clandown, near Radstock, Avon, weighs 28lb (12.7kg); but the heaviest recorded domestic cat was a male tabby called Himmy, from Cairns in Australia, who weighed 46lb 15¼oz (21.3kg) and died at the age of 10 years. *Bristol Eve. Post, 24 April; Mirror, D.Mail, 26 April 1997.*

Loopy-holes in the law

EMPLOYERS MAY NO longer "discriminate" against workers who flip their lids, nor ask during job interviews whether candidates have ever suffered mental illness. Firms must also provide "reasonable accommodation" to which staff can go to quieten down if they have a nasty turn. New regulations from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in Washington, make it illegal for a school to refuse to employ a teacher on the grounds that he is a paranoid schizophrenic. The guidelines are the latest interpretation of the ultra-politically-correct 1990 Americans With Disabilities Act.

The world's largest private parcels company is being sued by America's equal opportunities commission for refusing to let employees with only one eye drive its delivery vehicles. Although the Atlanta-based United Parcel Service insists there are proven safety reasons for its refusal, it has been told the ban is discrimination under the Americans With Disabilities Act. *Sunday Telegraph, 4 May; D. Telegraph, 22 Mar 1997.*

UNDER THE 1994 American Indian Religious Freedom Act, the Pentagon is to let the 9,200 Native Americans in the armed forces use peyote, the hallucinogenic cactus of the Southwest and Mexico, but only for religious purposes and not in military vehicles, ships and planes. Those who take it will have to notify their commander when they've finished their ceremonies, to ensure that they don't put lives at risk while still under its influence. It stays in the body for 12 hours. The new rule gives peyote the legal status enjoyed by sacramental wine in some Christian services. But Indians fear that taking their sacred cactus might nonetheless leave a black mark on their record.

Peyote, containing mescaline, was popularised among non-Indians by Aldous Huxley in *The Doors of Perception* (1954). It has been used by American and Mexican Indians for at least 10,000 years and is a sacrament in the Native American Church, which has 250,000 members. Peyote rituals customarily begin at sundown and last until daylight. The buttons are sliced and eaten, or drunk as tea. *NY Times, NY Daily News, 17 April; Guardian, 19 April 1997.*

this just in...this just in...this just in...this just in...

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IN APRIL, thousands gathered at various traffic signs on freeways in Washington State to witness miraculous images of Our Lady of Guadalupe, an apparition of the Virgin Mary that first appeared to a Mexican peasant in 1531 and became the patron saint of Mexico. Another Guadalupe acheropite appeared on a bedroom wall in Colorado in February; and on 1 June yet another appeared in a dried up puddle in a Mexico City subway station. Full report next issue.

A MUSLIM girl in Huddersfield who sliced open a tomato on 8 June found the Arabic message: "There is but one God and Mohammed is his prophet" inside each segment. Within four days, some 200 people had come from as far away as Manchester, Birmingham and London to see the 'miracle' fruit, which recalls the holy aubergines of the Midlands [see *FT55:4*]**. Photograph next issue.**

THE VATICAN has ruled that tears of blood shed by a plaster statue of the Virgin Mary at Civitavecchia north of Rome two years ago were "authentic", but stopped short of declaring it a miracle. The statue was first reported to have cried on 2 February 1995 and 50 witnessed the tears. The Vatican said that it had detected no signs of "trickery", even though the brown liquid was shown to be male human blood and the Gregori family, who own the statue, refused to give blood for DNA tests [see *FT81:11, 93:15*]**.** *Times, 4 June; Sunday Telegraph, 8 June 1997.*

CHUNKS OF ice the size of houses have been caught plunging into Earth's atmosphere from space, vindicating Louis Frank of the University of Iowa who has battled against entrenched denial of the phenomenon by the astronomical establishment for the past decade. Full report next time.

ASTRONOMERS ANNOUNCED on 12 June that a two-mile-wide asteroid known as 3753, is a companion to Earth, trapped in a "horsehoe" orbit by our gravitational field. First, it orbits the Sun inside Earth but, as it catches up with us, gravity swings it away from the Sun. Earth, then on a tighter orbit, catches up with 3753. *D.Telegraph, 12 June 1997.*

FUTHERMORE, AN American astrophysicist has suggested the Earth my once have had a near neighbour which wandered off into space, along with other bodies. Oimitris Christodoulou, from Louisiana State University, announced at June's meeting of the American Astronomical Society that he had discovered a new way to predict the positions of the planets.

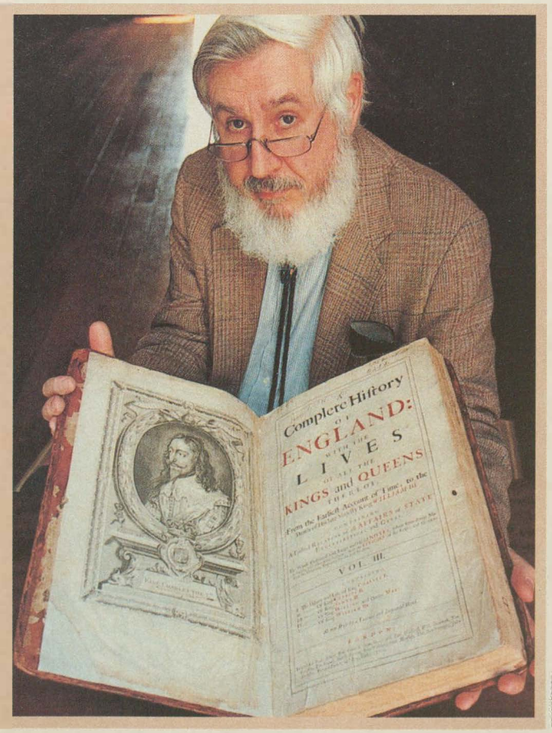
According to his theory, the planets coalesced in positions corresponding to concentric rings in the vast gas cloud which eventually became our solar system. By slotting the position of Earth into his calculations, he has discovered that while most other "rings" are occupied by planets and asteroid belts, the fourth is empty; this may indicate that it was once occupied by a planet, which has since escaped. He notes that Mars is slightly removed from the fifth 'ring', which he feels may indicate that it was disturbed from a previous position. He concedes that his speculations are far from perfect; for example, there are several other vacant 'rings' in the outer Solar System. *New Scientist, 14 Jun 1997*

Return of the tome

AN ENGLISH HISTORY book has been returned to Harvard University 233 years after it was checked out.

Volume three of *The Complete History of England with the Lives of All the Kings and Queens Thereof* by Bishop White Kennett was published in London in 1706 and given to the university in 1709. It was one of 144 books out on loan when fire broke out and destroyed the rest of the 5,000-volume collection in 1764.

No-one seems to know where the rather undistinguished history book has been all this time. Last winter, a bookseller contacted one of Harvard's history professors and offered to sell the calf-bound, two-inch (5cm) thick folio back to the library (its provenance was shown by the flyleaf stamp). The dean of faculty found an anonymous donor to cover the cost of the volume, which was not disclosed. *[AP] 10 May 1997.*



POPPERFOTO

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UNLUCKY LENIN: Fearful that Boris Yeltsin plans to bury Lenin and demolish his mausoleum in Red Square, some communists have tried to present his body as a holy relic, any disturbance of which would bring doom to Russia. "On 19 June 1941 Soviet archæologists broke the taboo and opened the tomb of Tamburlaine," said Yuri Izyumov, editor of a communist newspaper at a news conference in March. "Two days later Nazi Germany attacked Russia." *Guardian, 29 Mar 1997.*

ART ATTACK: Emergency services sealed off an area of downtown Tallahassee for two hours after a council worker spotted a pipe bomb in a store. The device, four small pipes wrapped with electrical wire and topped with a small white clock, turned out to be a modern art exhibit which had been on display for the previous 10 years. *London Eve. Standard, 10 Feb 1997.*

CRAZY GUY: An unnamed bus driver was transporting 20 mental patients from Harare to a mental hospital in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, when he stopped for a few drinks at an illegal roadside bar. Returning to the bus, he found that the mental patients had escaped; so he went to the nearest bus stop and offered free rides to 20 people. These he delivered to the mental hospital and informed the staff that they were easily excitable. It took medical personnel three days to uncover the foul play. The real patients were still at large, according to this dubious yarn which appeared in the *Financial Mail (South Africa), 4 April 1997.*

TAXI TAXED: Danish taxi driver Jorgen Gilberg accepted a booking from an elderly Dane for a 2,600 mile round trip from Copenhagen to the Vatican. When they arrived, the man explained that he had to collect the £2,500 fare from the Pope, who owed him £4,400. Then he admitted that the voices in his head might have misled him. "I had to laugh," said Gilberg. "I couldn't get angry with a man who wasn't playing with a full deck." So he drove him back to Copenhagen. *Guardian, 15 May; Independent, 16 May 1997.*

SEA-KING HELP: Police in Java sought divine help in solving the murder of Fuad Syafruddin, a journalist beaten to death at his home last August, by throwing the victim's blood samples into the sea. "The police were hoping the names and faces of the culprits would be revealed to them in a dream," said one witness. No arrests followed. It was widely believed that Syafuddin was murdered after uncovering details of illegal land acquisition by the local authorities. His widow was suing police for obstruction of justice. *Guardian, 6 Mar 1997.*

sidelines

SNAKE ATTACK: An 18ft (5.5m) serpent of the same species as the star of the film *Anaconda* surprised three children aged seven, 11 and 13, as they were fishing on the Ucayali river in Peru's Amazon jungle on 19 April. The snake toppled the children's boat and crushed it, witnesses said. Luis Losa, director of the Hollywood film about a 40ft (12m) snake in the Amazon, is Peruvian. *Houston Chronicle, 20 April 1997.*

BUSTED: Five fortune tellers were arrested by Iranian intelligence officers in Mashhad, where there is a Shi'ite shrine. The ministry said that they used geomancy charts and practised "summoning ghosts and quackery". *[AFP] 31 Jan 1997.*

ANIM-OLDS: Dudu, the world's oldest captive giant panda, celebrated her 35th birthday at Wuhan Zoo in China's Hubei province on 28 April. Two weeks later, Rex, believed to be the word's oldest domestic cat, passed his 31st birthday in Austin, Texas. His owner, Jake Perry, 56, feeds him regularly on bacon and eggs. *South China Morning Post, 29 April; Mirror, 15 May 1997.*

CROC CROAKS: Gomek, billed as the largest crocodile in captivity, has died at the St Augustine Alligator Farm in Florida. The porosus crocodile, caught in New Guinea in the 1950s, was 17ft (5m) long, 10ft (3m) around the stomach and weighed 1,900lb (862kg). He was thought to have been 60–80 years old. Members of the species can live up to 90 years. Park owners plan to have Gomek stuffed for display. *[AP] 6 Mar 1997.*

CAR HITS BACK: A driver, angered by a duck waddling slowly across the road, smashed his fist into the steering wheel, which released the airbag. As a result, the man suffered a broken collar-bone and three cracked ribs. *Mirror, 25 Feb 1997.*

ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLD DOG: Prince recuperates at the home of Gretchen Nelson, an animal shelter volunteer in Lodi, California

Bark from the dead

A POODLE CALLED Prince was knocked down by a car in California. When owner Ruben Mojica could not resuscitate him she took what she thought was his dead body to the local dog pound where he was put in the freezer. When vet Earl Monroe opened the freezer 18 hours later, Prince looked up listlessly, got up and walked around. He was treated for an ear infection and freezer burn. Although he had appeared dead, he was really in a coma – his matted hair had provided life-saving insulation. *[AP] 19 May 1997.*

A SPANISH DOG was hit by a car as its owner, Jose Ruiz, was taking it for a walk. Unable to watch his pet suffer, Ruiz asked the driver to kill the dog. Hitting the animal with a stone, the driver concluded that it was dead and buried it nearby. Ruiz could hardly believe his eyes when, two days later, he found the dog scratching at the front door, its injuries preventing it from barking. He rushed the animal to a vet, who assured him the dog would recover completely. *Hong Kong Standard, 14 May 1997.*

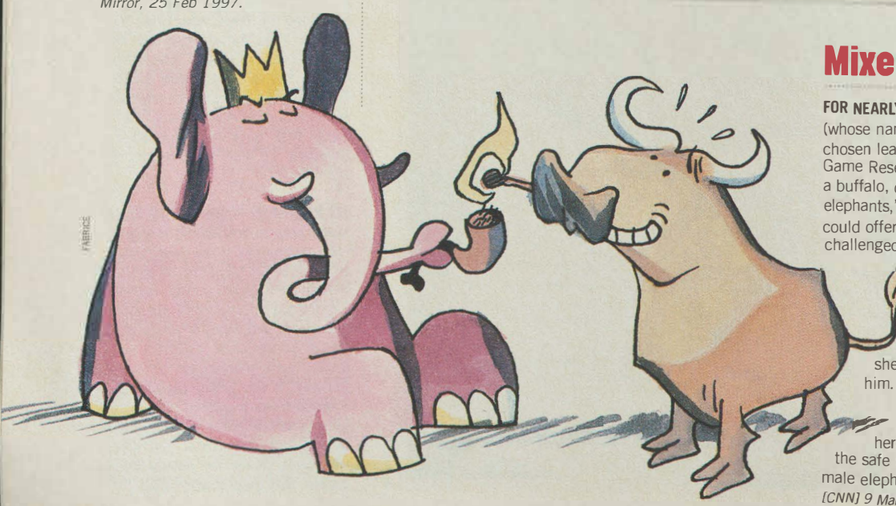
Doctor X-ray

VENEZUELAN DOCTORS ARE baffled by an image of a revered doctor and candidate for sainthood that appeared in a stomach X-ray of 10-year-old Alejandro Cuadra. He was taken to hospital in Maracay on 17 February with back pains, but later released, apparently fit and well. "The image is very clear of a man with a moustache, dressed in a suit," said Dr Guiseppe Ferraloto, who treated the boy.

The ghostly form bears a striking resemblance to Dr Jose Gregorio Hernandez, a bowler-hatted GP from the 19th-century who healed the poor for free and is credited with miraculous powers. He was also the first person to be killed in a car accident in Venezuela, being run down in 1919. *[R] 22 Feb 1997.*

Some people believe Hernandez to be a saint, writes DAVID HAMBLING, but the Vatican have been slow to recognise him because he is already considered to be a god by the cult of Maria Lionza, a hotch-potch like voodoo and Santeria, blending African religion with Christianity and native Indian beliefs. The cult, with many thousands of followers in Venezuela, has a large pantheon of deities; at the top is Maria Lionza (La Reina – the queen – a 19th-century mystic) and second in importance is Dr Hernandez. His tomb in Caracas attracts a stream of pilgrims and many miracles have been attributed to his power. There are shrines to him at Chivacoa, the heartland of the cult, and busts of the doctor are sold alongside those of other deities such as Cacique Guaicaipuro and Negro Primero.

The miraculous X-ray image will no doubt stoke religious fervour. It will be interesting to see if Rome attempts to reclaim Dr Hernandez for the Church in the face of competition from a vigorous new religion.



FABRIS

Mixed-up elephant

FOR NEARLY 20 years, an elephant called Nzou (whose name means 'elephant') has been the chosen leader of a herd of 22 buffalo in the Imire Game Reserve, Zimbabwe. "Perhaps she thinks she's a buffalo, or perhaps the buffalo think they are elephants," is the only explanation a gamekeeper could offer. Over the years, 14 young buffalo have challenged Nzou for the top job and died in combat. She also killed a young elephant introduced at one point to keep her company. Other animals, however, including people, appear safe. Her keeper even owes his life to her, after she stopped an angry buffalo from pounding him. According to rangers, other elephants know Nzou is in the game reserve, but she shows no inclination to leave her herd of buffalo for her own kind. To stay on the safe side, wardens are keeping four young male elephants in the park out of Nzou's range. *[CNN] 9 Mar 1997.*

Pedalling puppy

Momotaro the bicycling dalmation makes his rounds in Chiba, east of Tokyo, Japan. The three-year-old puppy prodigy learnt the trick in only six weeks and is making his mark on Japanese television shows.

POPPERFOTO/REUTER

sidelines

HOISTED: There was sweet revenge for motorists on 24 April when George Musgrave fell victim to his own invention – the yellow line – for the first time in his life. Mr Musgrave, 81, came up with the idea of the yellow line prohibiting parking in 1947 while working in Greenwich, for which the council paid him £2. He parked on a single line in Eastbourne for five minutes, thinking he could stop for unloading. He failed to impress the traffic warden, who fined him £20. *Guardian, D.Telegraph, Times, 25 April 1997.*

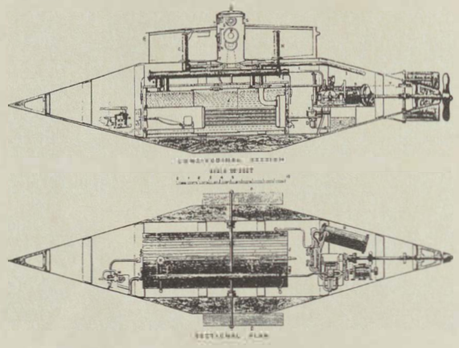
WHAT A HERBERT: After waiting on top of Mount Herbert in New Zealand for six years for the world to end, hermit Gerald Cover gave up and came down to look for a wife. There was a last-minute decision by an Auckland woman not to join him on the mountain following his 1991 advert for a wife. He now claims that God told him the End will come in 2011AD. *[AP] 13 Feb 1997.*

ENDLE$$ CA$H: In 1995, former Hong Kong resident Louise James, now living in Colorado, gave $600, the last bit of cash in her old Bank of China account, to Pastor Gene Preston of Hong Kong's Union Church. It mysteriously reappeared in 1996, so she donated it to Mother's Choice. In 1997, it popped up again in her account, so she again gave it to Gene Preston, who had by then set up the Community Church of Hong Kong. Louise James said it was "a modern day equivalent of the story of the loaves and fishes". *South China Morning Post, via Guardian, 13 Mar 1997.*

NUCLEAR THREAT: A pair of drunken Russian workmen stole two atomic warheads from "Factory X", east of the Urals, in November 1993, according to a Russian disarmament expert quoted in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* on 20 April. Vladimir Orlov, head of the Moscow Institute for Security and Politics, told a seminar in Bonn in April that the theft, done for a bet, was the first time a nuclear weapon had been stolen. Officials in Moscow were quick to deny the story. *[R] 21+22 April 1997.*

LASER ATTACK: The Pentagon voiced a protest to Moscow after the Russian cargo ship *Kapitan Man*, in United States waters off Seattle on 4 April, allegedly fired a laser beam at a Canadian Navy helicopter, causing eye injuries to two of the crew. The Pentagon claimed that the Russian ship was spying on the *USS Ohio*, a nuclear submarine. US officials searched the boat three days later and didn't find a laser gun on board; but one photograph reportedly shows a red light coming from the vessel's bridge. *Washington Post, 14 May 1997.*

Geller guesses the sub spot



BACK FROM THE DEPTHS: *Resurgam* – located by Uri Geller, but its position was documented

REPORTS EMERGED AT the end of 1996 that Uri Geller had again apparently struck home with his alleged psychic powers. In 1988, Geller was approached – at least partly in jest – by radio producer William Scanlan-Murphy and asked to pinpoint the last resting place of an early submarine, the *Resurgam* ("I will rise again"), built by the eccentric 19th-century clergyman Rev George Garratt. Geller placed a mark on a map, about four miles out to sea off the coast of Rhyl.

Scanlan-Murphy began searching for the *Resurgam*, which sank in 1880, with Garratt's great-grandson Bill Garratt. They ignored Geller's suggestion and instead concentrated their search on an area near Colwyn Bay where the submarine was believed to have sunk. After a fruitless search, and out of pocket to the tune of £1million, Garratt and Scanlan-Murphy concluded that the wreck much have broken up and abandoned their quest.

However, in 1995, the wreck was discovered, reportedly "four or five metres" from Geller's mark. It was finally located at a depth of 71ft (21m) by Chester diver Keith Hurley after a North Wales fishing boat snagged its nets on it. It is due to be raised this year and is likely to go to the Warship Preservation Trust, Birkenhead, where it was launched in 1880.

As is so often the case where Geller is concerned, the waters were quickly muddied; a correspondent to the *Daily Post*, soon after initial reports of the submarine's discovery, suggested that the circumstances of its location might have been less than paranormal. According to Mr John Miller of Garston, in Liverpool, the location of the *Resurgam* was clearly marked on a map of North Wales showing all ships that had gone down in the area.

The *Resurgam*'s history prior to its sinking is no less fascinating. It was one of a number of contributions to the development of submarines by members of the clergy; another early submersible, the *Holland 1* of 1901, was designed by Christian Brothers employee John Holland. Rev Garratt, known popularly as Garratt Pasha, was every inch the eccentric Victorian inventor. He demonstrated his revolutionary air-recycling system – the pneumataphore – standing on the bed of the Seine for four hours; it worked by using caustic soda to 'clean' already-breathed air, which is the same system used by modern 're-breather' units. Sadly, his third great invention – a steel-rimmed 'self-defence mortar board' – didn't grip the public imagination in the same way and after another of his submarines sank, he died in poverty.

A RESEARCH MISSION is to examine the possibility of raising the wreck of the *Resurgam* before it is further damaged by local fishing boats. Although fishermen have been alerted to its position, it is feared that a beam trawler – which drags a steel beam along the seabed – may damage or destroy the wreck. The Government's Archælogical Diving Unit will be heading a team of 98 divers which will begin a two-week study of the wreck in June; their brief is to record as many details of the wreck as possible, and assess the possibility of safely moving it. The Welsh heritage agency Cadw is said to be considering applications from organisations interested in contributing to the cost of an operation to raise the wreck. *D. Telegraph 10 Nov; D. Post 12+18 Nov 1996; Guardian 10 Apr; Times, 12 May 1997.*

BOTH PHOTOS: ALISON MCDOUGAL

[Top] The River Dour in front of Kearnsey Abbey in November 1996; [above] Sister Ambrose is pleased by the rise in level

River rises from dry

LAST AUTUMN, THE River Dour was dead, its bed parched, its wildlife gone. Now, in a reversal of the national trend, the water is back and ducks, geese and moorhens nest on its banks. It is not known why the aquifer-fed Dour, at Dover, has risen again – it is running at about half the rate it used to – when nearby rivers continue to subside after a severe winter drought and a climate change which has robbed east Kent of huge quantities of rainfall.

Last year, Graham Warren, the Environment Agency's Kent water resources manager, arranged for 1.5 million gallons of water to be pumped into the Dour from a specially built borehole, but is quite puzzled by its sudden revival. Some suggest that the borehole might have tapped into an unknown underground reservoir, but Mr Warren said that "the geology rules out the existence of an artesian well or anything like that". The sisters of the Christian Retreat who run the Kearnsey Abbey nursing home near Dover lost their two and a half acre lake when the Dour dried up, but the lake has now refilled and is home again to ducks, moorhens, coots, geese and a swan. Even the trout are back, having been restocked by a local fisherman.

"We all prayed for it to happen and now we thank God," said Sister Ambrose, the community's leader. On 30 November, she noticed that the lake bed had begun to soften. "Exactly a month later, on 30 December, it was full, and now it is overflowing the sluices and running down to the sea." *Sunday Telegraph, 20 April 1997.*

Unusual Uganda

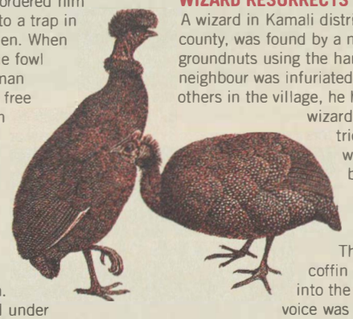
Further tales of the unexpected from the pages of *The Monitor*, a Kampala newspaper. Special thanks to Kelvin Murray and Anna Bozello. The last selection form *The Monitor* was in FT87:45.

CORPSE CANED

A porter with the Re-Raghwani Construction Company, known only as Alaani, died in Kampala on 10 January 1995 when three cement blocks fell on his head. Arrangements were made to transport the body to Butiiti for burial. The vehicle broke down at Kaloonga, but mechanics could find nothing wrong. The mourners escorting the body spent the night by the roadside. The next day, the vehicle started up without difficulty, but it stopped again in Mubende town. An elderly relative then decided that the trouble lay with the deceased, who didn't want to be buried. He removed the corpse from the coffin and caned it with all his strength. When he had finished, the vehicle started up and the body was transported to Toro at 4pm on 14 January. *[20 Jan 1995.]*

BIRD SPEAKS TO HUNTER

Game trapper Gabriel Malaika of Buhimba village in Hoima district got a jolt when a guinea fowl in his trap ordered him to free it. It had fallen into a trap in Malaika's groundnut garden. When he attempted to get it, the fowl reportedly spoke in a human voice and ordered him to free it because he would be in danger if he harmed it. Malaika ignored the bird and took it home. As he was looking for a knife to slaughter it for supper, a swarm of bees attacked him and forced him to flee into a nearby banana plantation. He ran with the fowl held under his arm, strangling it inadvertently. After killing it, Malaika ran berserk through the village shouting in a language which sounded like Chinese or Greek. He sent people at the Buhimba trading centre fleeing for safety. Police handed him over to his parents. By the time of the news report, Malaika's relatives were consulting local witchdoctors about a cure. Rumours say that Malaika trapped the guinea fowl which owned the village and the stream called Rwenkondwa. *[14 Dec 1996.]*



GIRL REFUSED TO MARRY CAT

People of Ikoba village in Masindi district were surprised when a girl called Nyamaizi claimed a cat had asked her to marry it. Nyamaizi and her sister were in their house on the night of 24 January when there was a knock. Nyamaizi opened the door and found a black cat which proposed marriage to her in a human voice, speaking fluent Lunyoro. She was speechless with shock and the cat repeated its offer when Nyamaizi's sister joined her at the door. "*Nyakiliza ha bibero byawe* [Lift me and put me on your lap]", the cat reportedly told the girl. The two girls fled, but the cat pursued them. Next morning, the cat was caught and burnt by an angry crowd in a local school. Its ashes were later removed and taken to a river. The correspondent for *The Monitor* found out that in Lunyoro this kind of thing is called "Kifoka" – something which can change into anything and kills anyone who welcomes it. The person only lives if it is killed and burnt. *[16 Feb 1997.]*

BLACK RAIN

Residents of Ndejje parish in Mpigi district were alarmed by strange rain which fell in their parish in the early hours of 22 December 1996, leaving pools of black coloured water. Some of the residents said they were still scared of using the water from the rain, and requested experts to examine it. The black rain started falling some minutes past 5am and stopped at 7am. Residents initially assumed that people with ill intentions had poured black substances into their water, but when they called on neighbours to witness, they also came out with similar complaints. "I used most of the strange water for cooking and now don't know what fate awaits us," a shopkeeper lamented. *[1 Jan 1997.]*

WIZARD RESURRECTS

A wizard in Kamali district, Bugaya sub-county, was found by a neighbour frying groundnuts using the hand of a corpse. The neighbour was infuriated because, like many others in the village, he had feasted on the wizard's groundnuts. He tried to strangle the wizard, whose screams brought other villagers on the scene. They proceeded to beat the wizard to death. Three days later, as the coffin was being lowered into the ground, the wizard's voice was heard from inside the coffin saying, "You killers, leave me alone" (or in the embroidered version by Victor Lewis Smith in *Private Eye*, "You killers, give me back my groundnuts".) The incredulous villagers opened the coffin and found the wizard with eyes wide open and an angry look about him. They ran off, but for fear of misfortune all the villagers who had taken part in the killing later appeased him with a male goat each. *[26-28 April 1995.]*

SNAKE ARRESTS BANANA THIEVES

Two banana thieves, Chrisestom Kasolo and his wife Nakiyimba, were arrested on 4 August 1996 by a snake posted sentry by Mzee Daniel Luzinga, the owner of the plantation in Mukono. The cobra bit Nakiyimba and coiled around Kasolo's neck. Residents were shocked to see Kasolo heading for Luzinga's home with the cobra coiled around his neck. Kasolo pleaded it was hunger and Satan who drove him to steal, asked Luzinga for mercy and pleaded for the serpent to be removed from his neck. The snake flicked its fangs without biting Kasolo, but threatened him by moving its neck and head around when he tried to forcibly remove it. "Will you ever steal again?" Luzinga asked him, to which he said, "No sir". Luzinga then ordered the cobra to leave him. Luzinga also treated his wife Nakiyimba for snakebite. *[23 Aug 1996.]*

WIRED FOR WEIRD

Welcome to the first compilation of curious web sites from Jeff Koyen, who will alternate in this slot with Dave Walsh. Jeff describes himself as 'Your desktop Virgil on the verge of the World Wide Web'.

UFO FOLKLORE

UFO photos, articles and links from the perspective that UFOs are the Greatest Folklore of the Century. "It is up to the reader to view and interpret this material for themselves." A nice balance of skepticism and evangelism.

MIROSLAW MAGOLA'S HOME PAGE

The Magnetic Man has your spoon-on-the-nose trick beat, in spades. Pots, pans, even wood and plastic-it all sticks to his body "by psychokinesis." Includes pictures, articles and updates on his life and times. In English, German, Spanish and Polish.

THE SURVIVAL CENTER

These folk ask, somewhat ominously, "Are you prepared in case of just 72 hours without electricity?" If you can't say for sure, perhaps you'd do well to pay them a visit. Everything you need for self-reliant living in the event of catastrophe.

THE XXX BIBLE

Deviant excerpts from the King James. Indexed by subject, from abortion to human sacrifice to, um, watersports.

YEAR 2000

THE YEAR 2000 INFORMATION CENTER

The computer industry's millennial bug is the Year 2000 programming problem. Not up to speed? School yourself at this site, the definitive Y2K resource center.

THE OBITUARY PAGE

A repository for the names of people who are all, well, dead. The recently-deceased famous are listed on the main page, and visitors are encouraged to submit their own eulogy in the creepy-because-it's-true Virtual Memorial Garden. "Pets are perfectly acceptable."

Jeff Koyen is a freelance writer and publisher of Crank magazine (www.crank.com). Send items of interest to ft@crank.com.

Knockout nipples

FIVE WOMEN AND a man were arrested by Thai police in a sting operation after a spate of fatal and near-fatal druggings in which tourists passed out after licking prostitutes' nipples. The gang admitted druggings in Pattaya and Bangkok over several months in 1996, although they denied being involved in the deaths of at least 45 tourists from drug overdoses in Pattaya during the year.

Amorn Saiyakul, at 19 the youngest prostitute in the gang, told police about three ways she was taught to administer the knockout drug. "The easiest was to drop the drug in the drink. That usually worked. But if there was no drink available I could pass it on by placing it under my tongue and very quickly giving the man a deep kiss. If they complained, I told them it was an aphrodisiac. The third way was to rub it on my nipples and let the tourist suck on them. They took about 20 minutes to pass out."

Among the gang's victims were three Austrians who slept through Christmas after being drugged at the Thai Garden Hotel in Pattaya. One of them claimed he was robbed of cash and gold worth £17,500. Last October, an American tourist woke 24 hours after being drugged, having lost his possessions. He said that the last he remembered was sucking on a nipple.

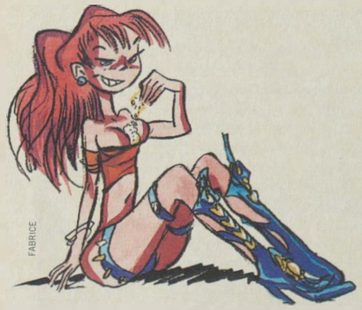
Meanwhile, police in Bangkok investigated the heart-attack deaths of two Swedes, aged 32 and 35, in a rundown hotel over the New Year. "They had been drinking," said a policeman, "but it is beyond coincidence that two men in their 30s should have died simultaneously of heart attacks."

The breast sucking trick is nothing new. In 1992, four transsexuals were arrested for picking up Thai customers and tourists outside Bangkok's Regent Hotel and knocking them out with tranquillisers in drinks, on chocolates or smeared on nipples before robbing them. Upjohn Halcion tranquillisers were used, the same brand favoured by American serial killer Geoffrey Dahmer. Both in 1992 and in the current run of muggings, police believe that there were many other victims who were too embarrassed to come forward. For an earlier report, see *FT72:9*. *South China Morning Post, 30 Dec 1992; Times, Maryborough (Australia) Chronicle, 7 Jan; Sunday Mirror, 12 Jan 1997.*

SIMULACRA CORNER

These creepy alien heads are in fact capsules of snapdragons, both *Antirhinum majus* (Sawyer's Old-Fashioned Mixed) and our native snapdragon, *Antirhinum orontium*. The picture was taken by Nigel Fairman of Canterbury.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures. Send them to the editorial post box (with an SAE or international reply coupon) and we'll pay a fiver or ten dollars for any we use.



Burning query

THE FIRE THAT destroyed the thatched roof and bedrooms of a cottage in Norfolk on 26 February could have been caused by a spontaneously combusting rat, according to an insurance expert. Damage to the 400-year-old rented cottage in Puddledock near Attleborough was put at £60,000 and forced Roger and Sylvia Blindell to move into a caravan in the garden. Thirty firemen battled for five hours to contain the flames and senior fire officers had no idea what caused the blaze when the thatch was sodden with rain. They ruled out an electrical fault as there was no wiring in the roof and the chimney had only recently had a new flue liner fitted, so no sparks could have got through.

When a forensic expert for the French insurers visited the property, he saw a rat scurrying along the side of a small stream and suggested that a rat had crawled into the reed-and-straw thatch to die after eating poison containing phosphorous. As the animal decomposed, so the far-fetched hypothesis went, the phosphorous burst into flames upon exposure to air. As an alternative, the expert offered the more orthodox bird-dropping-a-lighted-cigarette theory, but seemed keener on the burning rat idea. It certainly appealed more to journalists. "I think the explanation is ludicrous," said Mrs Blindell.

Peter Bateman, President of the British Pest Control Association, writing to *The Times*, pointed out that phosphorous-based rat poisons have been banned for 35 years under The Animals (Cruel Poisons) Act 1962. However, AM Parsons wrote in to say that microbes can reduce organophosphates to phosphorous hydride (phosphene) which, in its impure form, is

spontaneously inflammable; and that dead rats contain sufficient organophosphate for the reaction to occur without the presence of rat poison. So the question then arises: why aren't rats spontaneously combusting every day? *D.Telegraph, Express, D.Mail, 6 May; Times, 6+9+17 May 1997.*

FIRE INVESTIGATOR STEPHEN Dixon spent most of March mixing hair gel with kitty litter in a bucket in his back yard, trying to get it to ignite and thus solve the mystery of the self-starting blaze that doused itself.

The fire happened shortly after noon on 25 February in a second-storey apartment on Jordan Avenue in Brunswick, Maine. After the tenant left for work, his cat jumped from the litter box to the bathroom vanity, knocking down some Dep Hair Gel which dripped into the box of Fresh Scoop kitty litter, leading to a spontaneous chemical combustion of some kind – or so the experts hope to demonstrate.

The flames spread to the floor, up a curtain and onto the wall next to a bottle of inflammable aftershave. The bottle burst, spraying alcohol over the walls, which then exploded in flames. The intense heat shattered the ceramic lavatory cistern, dumping five gallons of water on the floor and dousing the fire there. Water then sprayed from the lavatory's fill pipe onto the walls.

Tom Owen, who owns the building with his wife Jane, was baffled at how the fire began. There were no plugs or switches in the bathroom corner and the tenant was a trustworthy non-smoker who was out at the time. Dixon, an investigator with the state Fire Marshal's Office, had heard of similar cases. One involved a grocery store mixture of kitty litter and a bottle of vegetable oil that had shattered on the floor. The store manager swept it up and threw it in the dumpster, where it later caught fire. *[AP] 27 Mar 1997.*

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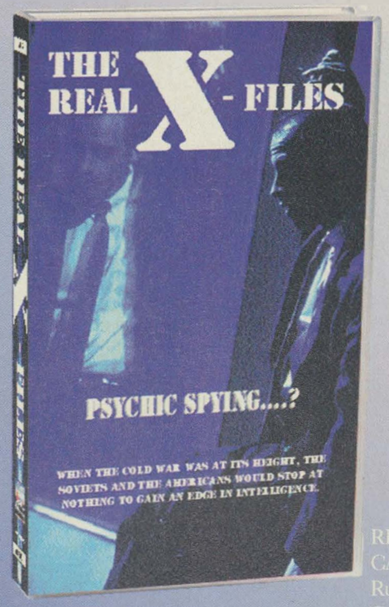

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Worcester Evening News, 19 Mar 1997.

ARCHANGELS TO GUARD VATICAN IN CYBERSPACE
Guardian, 25 Mar 1997.

ANIMALS TURN TO TEACHING
Basingstoke & North Hampshire Gazette, 14 June 1996.

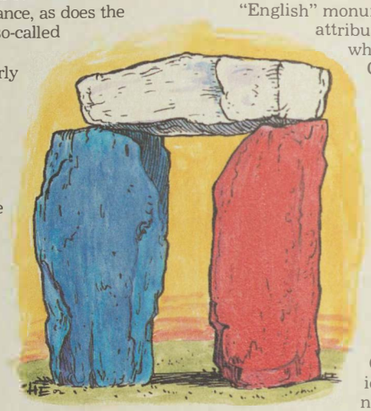
JUDGMENT DAY DATE DELAYED
Times Educational Supplement, 14 June 1996.

WESTINGHOUSE WILL BUY INFINITY FOR $3.9BILLION
Investor's Business Daily, 21 June 1996.

Voila, Stonehenge

ARCHÆOLOGICAL RESEARCH SUGGESTS that Stonehenge was built not by ancient Britons but by ancient Bretons. Dr Aubrey Burl, veteran authority on megaliths, says the monument's horseshoe design is unique in Britain, but has parallels at similar Neolithic sites in north-western France, as does the geometry of the so-called Station Stones.

Dr Burl, formerly a lecturer in prehistory at Hull University, is the author of *Stone Circles of the British Isles*, a catalogue of more than 1,300 such circles. Writing in the Wiltshire *Archæological Magazine*, he points out that figurines, axes and daggers carved at Stonehenge are found nowhere else in Britain, but are common in Brittany. Stonehenge has a solar alignment, again common in Brittany, while most other comparable British stone circles have key stones aligned with the Moon. Avebury also once appeared to have had a central horseshoe layout, and might therefore also have shared in the French connection.



HUNT EMERSON

"Stonehenge was probably the handiwork of a powerful and intrusive aristocracy from western France, perhaps Brittany," he said. Certainly, seafarers were crossing the Channel by 2500 BC when Stonehenge was built.

There was a certain amount of protest at the idea that such a prominent "English" monument was being attributed to foreigners – white witch Kevin Carlyon went so far as to fly the Union Jack inside Stonehenge at dawn on 25 March, declaring: "It is my theory that those living in this country invaded Europe – and not vice versa." Such a position is tenable, given the dearth of evidence.

Of course, any idea of separate nations on either side of the English Channel was unknown when Stonehenge was constructed and for many centuries afterwards; Brittany only became part of the French nation 400 years ago.

Western Daily Press, 28 Feb; Independent, Times, D.Telegraph, Guardian, D.Mail, 1 Mar; Psychic News, 12 April 1997.

Divers saved by dolphins

DORIS SVORINIC, 28, got into difficulties on 17 April while snorkelling with friends in the Indian Ocean off Garvies Beach, near Durban in South Africa. The waters are known to be visited by sharks.

"When I first went under I panicked and swallowed water," she said. "The sea was murky and I was very scared. For a short while I managed to start floating; but I was too exhausted to swim because I was also bruised and I had lost my flippers. While I was floating I took off my mask because I realised that I was hyperventilating. I was gasping for air. I thought I had taken my last breath before I would drown. Then, out of nowhere, about five dolphins appeared around me. They lifted me from underneath and began carrying me safely back to shore. They nudged me all the way to the breakers."

Ms Svorinic's relief was somewhat overshadowed by the disappearance of her neighbour Mark Frederic, 27. His body was later found by a navy patrol boat.

Last year, Martin Richardson was saved from a shark attack in the Red Sea when dolphins formed a protective ring around him [*FT92:9*]. *(AFP) Express, 22 April 1997.*

Two holes in one

TWO GOLFERS, Suzi Toft, left, and Jill Dyke, playing against each other in a four-ball competition, both shot holes-in-one at the same hole. The pair, playing at Trentham golf course, near Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, looked on amazed when their balls dropped into the 116-yard (106m) fourth hole within seconds of each other on 2 April. Ladbrokes gave odds of more than 100 million to one on amateur golfers achieving holes-in-one on the same green; but they couldn't even begin to put odds on what happened next.

On 9 April, as an ITN crew were filming a re-enactment of the feat, Mrs Toft, 72, who has played golf for 47 years, made another hole-in-one on the same hole. "It really is out of this world," she said. The shot was particularly hard as there was a bunker on the approach to the right and the green sloped to the left to more bunkers. Mrs Dyke, 60, then hit her tee shot to within 12in (30cm) of the flag. *Times, 9 April; D.Mail, D.Telegraph, Guardian, 10 April 1997.*

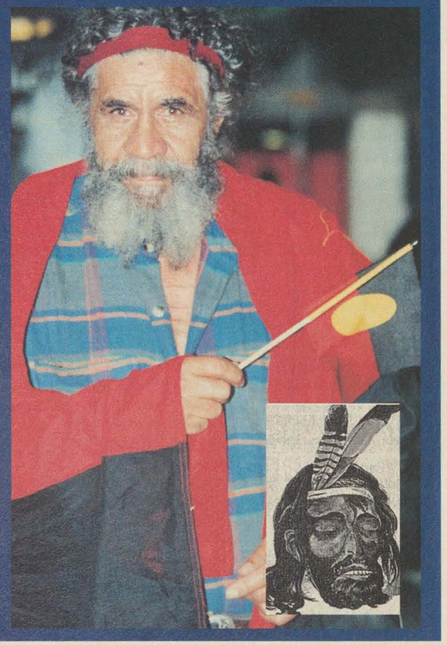
INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Bring me the head of Yagan

AN ABORIGINAL LEADER arrived in Britain on 20 May to retrieve his ancestor's head, hacked off in 1833. Ken Colbung claims direct descent from Yagan, a tribal leader of the Swan River people near Perth in Western Australia. Yagan mediated in several disputes with European settlers before being shot, decapitated and flayed for his ritual scars. His head was smoked, brought to England and ended up at the Liverpool City Museum. It was buried in Everton Cemetery in 1964 when it showed signs of decay. Ironically, the museum had anticipated problems and researched Yagan; they had concluded that he was of no particular importance. Four years later, 20 stillborn babies and two infants who had lived for less than 20 hours were interred in a mass burial above Yagan's remains. The grave is also occupied by a Peruvian mummy and the severed head of a Maori.

The Burial Act 1857 requires that if an exhumation is to disturb any other remains less than 100 years old, the consent of the next-of-kin is required. In response to past requests by Mr Colbung, 66, the Home Office had turned him down. Relatives of six of the dead babies had been traced and while one refused permission for exhumation, two others attached conditions "which could not be complied with for practical reasons." Mr Colbung was hoping to talk them round. "I am also hoping that the change in government will make a difference as the Home Secretary has the last say."

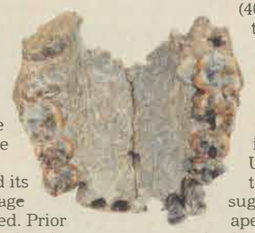
Forty years ago, Mr Colbung's tribe gave him the task of finding the head, and with the help of archæologists in England it was found in 1993. "This is a spiritual matter," he said. "We believe in reincarnation, and it is necessary for us to have the remains of a great leader reunited, so all of us can share in the strength of our departed elders." However, we have heard reports that an Aborigine rights organisation has protested about Mr Colbung's visit, saying that he has no official authority. Aborigines hold that if the head is not buried with the rest of the body, the body will continue to walk the earth. *FT* wishes Mr Colbung luck – at least he knows for certain where the head is, unlike Chief Gcalecka and his futile hunt for the skull of King Hintsa of the Xhosa [see *FT87:16, 91:15, 93:15*]. Mr Colbung was also said to be concerned at the treatment of the remains of the stillborn babies; in Aboriginal culture, they would have been given a full burial. *Independent, 12 May; Guardian, D.Telegraph, 21 May 1997.*



PA NEWS

Primate discoveries

A 2.33 MILLION-YEAR-OLD maxilla (upper jaw) holding nine teeth (pictured), found in 1994 in the Hadar badlands of northern Ethiopia, has been hailed as the earliest known fossil of the genus Homo, about 400,000 years older than the *Homo habilis* and *Homo rudolfensis* specimens from Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. Analysis of two argon isotopes in volcanic ash just above the stratum where the jaw was found allowed its approximate age to be calculated. Prior work at the Hadar site yielded the remains of 'Lucy' and other members of *Austalopithicus afarensis* (dated to 3.4–3 million years ago). The earliest pebble tools turned up recently in the same area [see *FT98:11*]. *(AP) 20 Nov; Science News, 30 Nov 1996.*



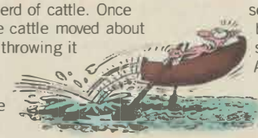
ASSOCIATED PRESS

FOSSILS 20.6 MILLION years old could be the remains of the first of the advanced apes, the oldest known ancestor common to humans and apes. The bones of the newly-named *Morotopithicus bishopi*, if their interpretation is generally accepted, will push back by at least five million years the origins of advanced primates. The evidence published in *Science* in April suggests that the creature was a tree-dweller weighing 88–110lbs (40–50kg), about the same as a modern chimpanzee. Vertebræ from Moroto-pithicus, found in Moroto, Uganda, in the early 1960s suggest that the ape had a stiff back, needed for standing upright occasionally as modern apes do. Teeth and cranial material also turned up at that time.

Recently, US palæontologists returned to the site and found a partial shoulder bone and parts of two femurs. The shoulder socket was round, suggesting that the ape could hang by its arms and the femurs had modern features. *Guardian, D.Telegraph, Times, 18 April; Int. Herald Tribune, 19 April 1997.*

More Plummeting Cows

THE STORY HAD an irresistible absurdity: a Japanese fishing boat had been sunk by a falling cow in the Sea of Okhotsk off the Eastern coast of Siberia. The shipwrecked crew were plucked from the sea, claiming that cows had fallen from the sky and one of them had gone straight through the deck and hull, capsizing the vessel. The fishermen were arrested for suspected marine insurance fraud, but freed after Russian and Japanese investigators found out that the story was true. Russian soldiers based on the island of Sakhalin had used a army transport plane to rustle a herd of cattle. Once airborne, the cattle moved about the aircraft, throwing it off balance. To avoid crashing, the crew drove them out of the large loading bay at the tail of the aircraft at 20,000ft (6,000m).



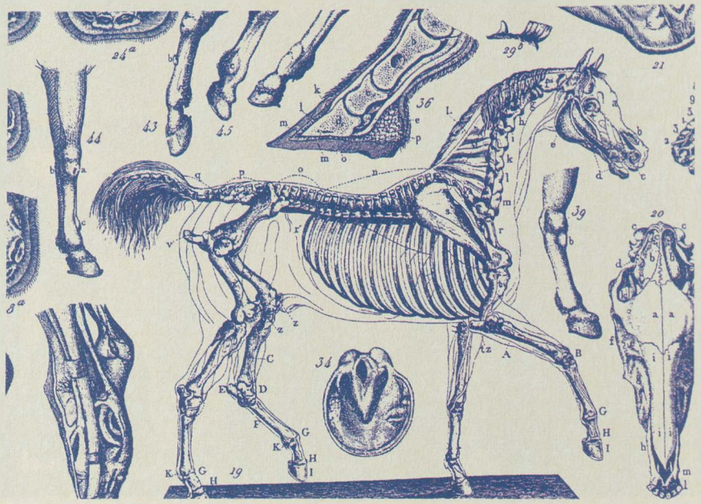
HUNT EMERSON

According to Andrew Gimson's report from Berlin for the *Daily Telegraph*, a German diplomat sent an account of the incident to Bonn to illustrate the appalling state of air safety in Russia. His fax stated that he heard the story from the "well informed" Moscow representative of the American Federal Aviation Authority. *The Daily Mail* and the *Express* said the report came by e-mail to the German embassy on 28 April from one of its consulates in eastern Russia. *The Scotsman*, meanwhile, claimed that Reuters had traced the story to a Russian television comedy series 18 months ago called *Peculiarities of the Hunt*. The falling cow was then written up in *Pravda* in its urban legends column, and from there made its way to the Internet, where it was mentioned in *The Scotsman*'s humorous report on the Darwin awards before being sent to the German embassy in Moscow, who took it seriously (the implication being that Germans lack a sense of humour).

All these journalists have a very short memory. The folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand was sent the story from the *Moscow News* in 1990 – or even earlier. In this version, there was only one cow and one surviving fisherman, and the latter was sent to a mental hospital rather than to prison. This was reported in the *Columbus Dispatch* in Ohio on 17 Sept 1990, and appeared in *Fortean Times* 57 with this splendid cartoon by Hunt Emerson, which later appeared on an *FT* mug. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, Mirror, 30 April; Scotsman, 1 May 1997.*

Evil stalks field of gory

As another horse-ripping is put down to the evil influence of the internet, Bob Rickard wonders whether the official belief in 'copycat' mutilators is a help or a hindrance



A VICIOUS ATTACK on a horse in a Sussex field led to an astonishing statement by Sussex police implying that the attacker might have been influenced by a TV drama. *Touching Evil*, shown between 9pm and 10pm on ITV on 27 May, featured a police investigation into a series of mutilations of horses in Britain, America and Japan. The following morning, a mare on a farm in East Sussex was found with a serious knife wound to her genitals. The animal was discovered when her owner came to groom her in a field at Rock Farm, near Rye. Five other horses in the same field were untouched.

"The television programme was about attacks on horses and we believe this could have been a copycat," said a spokeswoman for Sussex Police. However, a spokeswoman for the programme makers said that, while they deplored the incident, the programme itself did not depict an attack on a horse, but merely reported on one. "As far as I was aware," she told *The Guardian* (30 May 1997), "there was no specific link to sexual attacks on horses in the programme. I hope what we showed on screen did not encourage somebody to go out and do that to a horse."

This was the second sadistic attack on a horse in the county in that month. Unfortunately for the police theory, the attack on Master Lexion in his stables near Hailsham took place 10 days earlier and therefore could not be blamed on the TV drama. Besides, the nature of the attack was very different as a rusty six-inch nail had been driven into the horse's chin.

Following the detailed investigative article on horse-ripping by Robert Irving [*FT94:22*], *FT* received two official letters criticising us for publishing material which could incite copycat crimes. Martin Taggart, Director of Welfare for the British Horse Society, wrote to register his "dismay and disgust at such irresponsible reporting" and urging us to balance this with some positive help for Horsewatch – this latter we gladly do and publish their contact details at the end of this report. The second admonishment came from Michael J Harrison of the National Committee of Horse Watch Representatives. After telling us off for the graphic of a large knife which in the context distressed many horse-lovers (sorry about that), he said: "There is a very real risk, when details of such attacks as are listed in the article are made public, that some perverted individual will think it a good idea to go out locally to commit the same crime."

In our defence, I should point out that nearly all of the details had already appeared in local papers. It was not until we assembled the data for the past four years that we realised the extent of the crimes – several hundreds of animals at 170 locations – and these are only the ones we had clippings on.

We can understand the concern of these worthy societies, but we believe that suppression of information also has risks. While the police might suspect these crimes have a 'copycat' component, our limited survey plainly showed that this crime has a long history in which a myriad of different methods were used in different ways at different places and at different times. Perhaps one of the reasons why police have failed to catch these perpetrators is that the search for a pattern might be misleading them. The atrocities might be truly random.

We note another curiosity about the TV drama *Touching Evil*. As one TV guide put it: "A spate of barbaric attacks on horses leads Creegan to a group of young people being manipulated by a role-playing game on the internet." (*Sunday Times*, 'Directory', 24 May). Here, in one neat package, is brought together some of the key anxieties of the fundamentalist lobbies that we have chronicled in recent issues: the unholy alliance of fantasy role-playing games and the internet – omitting only the Satanic influence of rock music – which, it is said, reached its ultimate expression in the apotheosis of the Heaven's Gate 39. While such beliefs cloud the minds of the investigators, it is unlikely that they will get anywhere.

HORSEWATCH

If you have any information relating to theft of or attacks on horses please contact local police or call the confidential regional Horsewatch numbers – East: 01673 842748; Ireland: 01 475 5555; Midlands: 0161 628 7341; North-east: 01482 643448; Northern Ireland: 01861 523311; Scotland: 0131 311 3307; South-east: 01787 237880; South-west: 01202 229351; Wales: 01267 222020. Or contact PC Hugh Davies, Scotland Yard's liaison for equine crime on 0171 230 4462.

HORSE RIPPING TABLE OF INCIDENTS

Following on from *FT94:28*.

1996

23 Oct – Aldridge, Staffs: two mares gashed with craft knife. **15 Dec** – Snetterton, Norfolk: knife wounds to genitals. **16 Dec** – Helston, Cornwall: pony wrapped up in 10ft (3m) of barbed wire. Allanton, Lanarkshire: horse shot dead and two wounded.

1997

2 Jan – Worksop, Notts: 3ft (1m) iron bar forced down throat, smashing teeth and causing internal damage. Two days later, another in the same field slashed and beaten. **8 Jan** – Tevershall, Notts: stable with three horses set alight, killing one. Another stabled nearby repeatedly stabbed. **26 Jan** – Wadebridge, Cornwall: stabbed in head. **7 Feb** – Anstey, Leics: pregnant mare had legs tied together and was sexually assaulted and left bleeding. **10 Mar** – Larkhall, Lanarkshire: stabbed in neck. **26 Mar** – Harpham, E. Yorks: stabbed repeatedly in vagina. **c.8 April** – Truro, Cornwall: pony shot in face, survived. **12 April** – Cleator Moor, Cumbria: pregnant mare stabbed with screwdriver and had to be put down. Foal stillborn. **23 April** – Sandwith, Cumbria: foal fatally stabbed. **24 April** – Margate, Kent: horse poisoned. **8 May** – Gateshead, Tyne & Wear: pony's neck tied to railway line and mane set on fire. Rescued. **18 May** – Hailsham, E. Sussex: 6in (15cm) nail driven into chin and tongue. **28 May** – Rye, E. Sussex: knife attack in vagina. **7 June** – Crow, Hants: mare slashed.

Black-out bugs

MOST OF CHILE was blacked out for half an hour on the evening of 1 May. It was not the work of May Day guerrilla bombers as many Chileans feared, but an attack by seaweed. A large amount of marine kelp slipped into cooling ducts at a seaside power plant, shutting it down. The blackout extended from the northern town of Taltal to the southern port of Ancud, an area covering 80 per cent of the country's energy consumption and 93 per cent of its population. Traffic in Santiago and computer systems were thrown into chaos. *[R] 2 May 1997.*

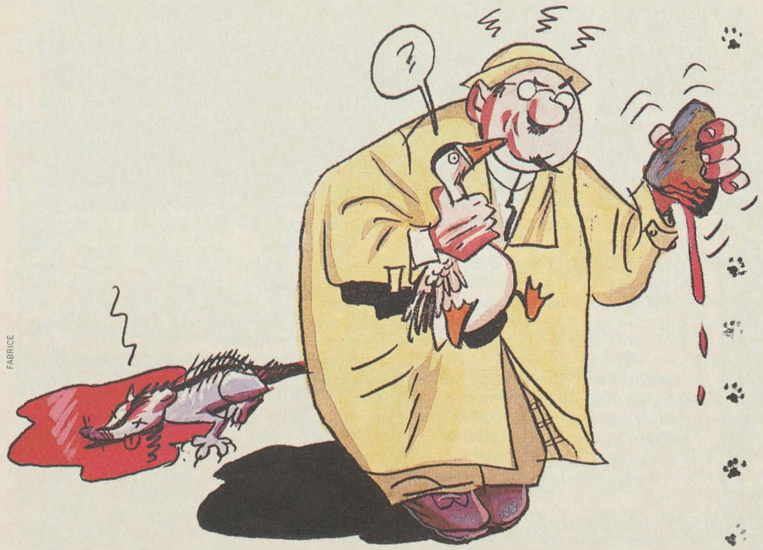
ALL OF SENEGAL suffered a four-hour blackout on the night of 24 January after a sparrowhawk flew into a high tension power line, causing it to short against another. The incident occurred at the Cap de Biches power plant, which produces about 80 per cent of the African nation's electricity. A protective mechanism automatically shut down the other two power stations. The sparrowhawk perished. *[R] 26 Jan 1997.*

THREE CATS PLAYING in a transformer were electrocuted and cut off the heating supply to a town in the freezing steppes of Kazakhstan on 23 January, leaving 110,000 residents shivering for at least six hours. "It only took an hour to discover the cause of the accident," said the Itar-Tass news agency, "but by then the boiler's element had gone out. It took at least six hours to get the water heated up again." *The Times (of Malta), 24 Jan 1997.*

FORGET KILLER BEES – an army of computer-eating ants from the genus Monomorium, immune to many pesticides, are muncing their way north from Brazil and could cripple technology across the US. Lured by the warmth of terminals, which resemble anthills, they feast on the sweet protective gel that coats circuit boards, exposing them to short circuits and corrosion. The ants also sabotage telephone circuitry, televisions and other products containing computer circuit boards.

With the international trade in computer technology, the ants could spread anywhere in the world. The best protection is to keep desktops free of food that might attract ants, so that they lose interest before they reach your computer and its banquet of circuitry.

Cousins of the computer-eaters were found to have eaten through the wiring of the world's largest superconductor while under construction in Texas and short-circuiting the system in the now-abandoned project. *Express, 20 May 1997.*



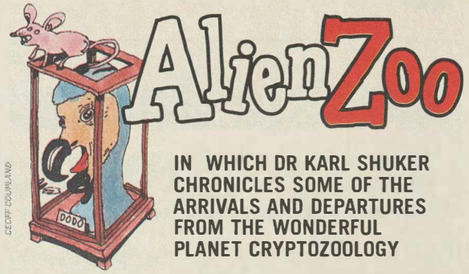
FABRICE

...or goosey gets it

On 24 April, a man walked into a doughnut shop in Bloor Street, Toronto, with a Canada goose under his arm and threatened to wring its neck unless he was given money. A female customer walked him to a nearby bank machine and withdrew $60 for him, after which he dropped the bird and fled. The goose was taken to the Toronto Humane Society and eventually released in a local park.

On 11 May, the man tried the trick again. He appeared on Queen Street carrying a baby racoon and a rock with which he threatened to bash its head in unless he was paid $50. Nobody offered to save the racoon, but a bus driver phoned the police, who collared the man after a scuffle. The racoon hid under a police cruiser, but was eventually captured. An examination of the 10-week-old animal found that its jaw was dislocated and broken in two spots and it had to be put down. "We don't know how his jaw was broken," said a Humane Society spokesman. "We're going to try and tell how old the injuries are by a post-mortem."

The next day, the man, identified as Peter Lerat, 33, was led naked into the courthouse (he refused to dress when he left his cell), but was clothed by the time he appeared in court. *Toronto Sun, 12+13+19 May; Victoria (BC) Times-Colonist, 12+13 May; Washington Post, 13 May.*



GEOFF COUPLAND

IN WHICH DR KARL SHUKER CHRONICLES SOME OF THE ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES FROM THE WONDERFUL PLANET CRYPTOZOOLOGY

SKULLS, STRIPES, AND SPECKLES

For several years, zoologist Dr Peter Hocking from Lima Natural History Museum has been investigating native reports of four different types of Peruvian mystery cat. One of these is the so-called speckled tiger, said to be as big as the jaguar (known colloquially as the 'tiger' in much of South America), but patterned with a unique speckling of tiny dots and equipped with very large, almost tusk-like canine teeth. Another is the 'striped tiger', also as big as the jaguar, but striped like a genuine Asian tiger. In 1994, Hocking succeeded in obtaining a female skull for each of these two mystery cats and sent photos of them to a number of American zoologists. Comments revealed so far have been mixed – whereas one (un-named) expert claimed that the speckled tiger skull appeared to represent a completely new species, others declined to pass any unequivocal opinion as to their possible taxonomic identity. *Angel Morant Forés, personal communication; Matthew Bille, personal communication.*

OUT OF THE ARK-IVES: SHAR KHORKHOI, THE ALTAI'S YELLOW PERIL

Since my article in the *FT Weird Year* book regarding the Gobi's electrifying allghoi khorkhoi or Mongolian death worm, I have learnt that this bizarre cryptid might have an equally strange relative. Czech explorer Ivan Mackerle, a longstanding death worm seeker, has kindly sent me a translated excerpt from Dondogijn Cevegmid's book, *Altajn Caadach Govd* (Ulan Bator, 1987). Cevegmid recalls the testimony of a herdsman from the lands south and southwest of the Altai Mountains, concerning the unidentified *shar khorkhoi* ('yellow worm').

While riding his camel along the Tost mountains, the herdsman had seen a long yellow creature just ahead. His camel also saw it, crying out in fear. Instantly, some more of these beasts emerged from holes in the ground close by, and began to approach. The man rode away, and as he looked back he allegedly saw about 50 yellow worms following him, but he soon out-distanced them. Nomads later told him that the subterranean *shar khorkhoi* is rarer now than it once was.

HAVE THE PEAK DISTRICT WALLABIES HOPPED OFF?

Over the years, several naturalised populations of wallabies, descended from zoo escapees/releases, have established themselves in parts of Britain (the most recent is a colony on an island in Loch Lomond), and according to police, wildlife liaison officers around the country, there has been a rise in wallaby sightings during recent times.

This is believed to be due to the warm climate enjoyed by the UK lately, but it might have come too late for the most famous British colony. The Peak District's population of red-necked wallabies has experienced great fluctuations in fortunes and numbers since its establishment in the late 1930s. At one stage, it boasted as many as 60 individuals, but as there does not appear to have been any conclusive sighting in the past two years, some zoologists and local farmers fear that the wallabies might have died out. *Wolverhampton Express and Star, 5 May; Daily Telegraph, 12 May 1997.*

Nessie dorsa

Nessie's back... and her head and flipper have been spotted breaking the surface of Loch Ness. Joe McNally looks at some of the video and photographic evidence that has reared its head

IT WAS REMARKED on the Forteana e-mail list recently that there seem to be more active lake monsters than Tories in Scotland. Nessie in particular seems to have been making many public appearances over the past year or so.

Probably the most dramatic sighting came in June 1996, when 16 people saw a wake moving quickly across Loch Ness. The wake was first sighted by Kate Munro, co-owner of the Craigdarroch House hotel in Foyers. She saw a disturbance in the water while walking with her daughter-in-law and husband, and the three stood and watched for a couple of minutes before returning to the hotel to observe from a distance, where they were joined by 13 guests and staff.

According to Mrs Munro, nothing was visible on the surface, but she and her husband have long believed that there is "some large aquatic creature in Loch Ness which could explain the Nessie sightings". Guests who had been party to the sighting seemed sure of what they had seen; Karen Hemingway of St Albans told reporters: "I have always been sceptical about the existence of Nessie, but now I am not so sure."

According to Jackie Campbell from the Official Loch Ness Monster Exhibition at Drumnadrochit, this was 1996's first Nessie sighting. It would be far from the last, as August brought with it a veritable Nessie flap, with unusual photographs and video footage appearing from four separate sources.

On 18 August, the *News of the World* – a cryptozoological journal of record if ever there was one – printed an alleged photograph of the elusive creature. It had been taken earlier that month by a Glasgow airport worker called Craig Kerr; he had been camping at Invermoriston with his family, and had used up a full roll of film taking pictures of his family. When the film was developed, he noticed an unexpected presence in one picture of his daughter and wife. In the top left-hand corner of the picture is what appears to be a distinctive long neck topped by a small head – almost a classic 'Nessie'.

At about the same time, Inverness art teacher Austin Hepburn snapped an unusual wake on the loch's surface near the village of Dores. He spotted a disturbance on the water and shot six pictures from a distance of about three-quarters of a mile (1,200m). "The surface of the loch was like a mirror," he explained, "then I saw this baffling movement in the water. It only lasted about four minutes, and was travelling north at little more than walking pace. Now, when I look through a magnifying glass at one of the pictures, I believe I can make out two black humps."

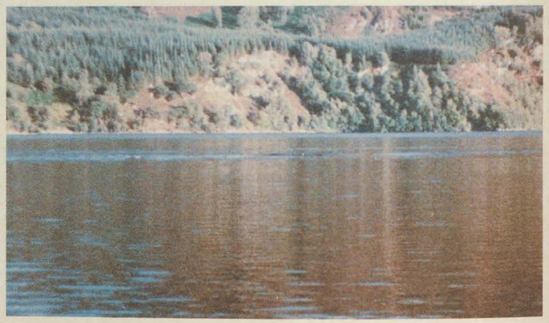
Later that month, Ian Finlayson of Carnoustie shot some video footage showing a "large, snake-like" creature moving through the water near the opposite bank. The footage was shot at Invermoriston, near the site of Craig Kerr's photograph. It apparently shows a number of black humps moving through the water, with an undulating motion. Finlayson, his wife and 12-year-old son had stopped at Invermoriston to have a picnic on his way to take family friend, 12-year-old Jason Parker, back to his family in Skye. They saw a snake-like object moving through the water at speed, and Ian grabbed his video camera and shot two minutes of footage.

Ian's wife, Vera, was sure that there was a comparatively rational explanation for the video. "I don't quite know what it was for certain, but I'm quite logical and I would have to say that it was a giant eel or something like that." The eel theory has been popular since the first Nessie land sighting of modern times, in 1934, when a couple driving along the new lochside road saw a large, eel-like form slither across it in front of them.

More Nessie pictures appeared at the end of the month, taken by a retired soldier from Carnoustie named Frank Wilson. Again, they were taken near Invermoriston. He had brought a friend, Willie McLean, and McLean's two sons Joseph and Alistair to the loch to teach them to fish, and had brought his camera "in case we caught anything big". He heard a whoosh, and saw something moving about 100 yards (90m) from shore. He estimated the object's size at 30–40ft (9–12m). It travelled for around 300 yards (275m), and then submerged just before hitting a dinghy. "A flipper appeared and then it was gone," said Wilson. "It was one of those things you had to see to believe."

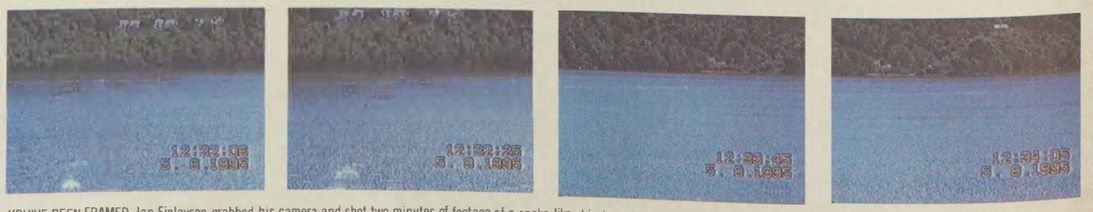
Soon afterwards, the McLean brothers' account also hit the papers, but mysteriously without any mention of Wilson or his pictures. Their account differed little from Wilson's – a whooshing sound followed by a large black object moving through the water – but while he said that the object had "two humps and a tail", the boys' father was adamant that what they saw had "no humps or head".

Aberdeen Evening Express, 15 Jun, 9+10+8 Sep; News of the World, 18 Aug; D. Mail, 5 Sept; Courier & Advertiser (Dundee), 19+20 Sept; Manchester Evening News, The News (Portsmouth), Middlesbrough Evening Gazette, Western Morning News, 20 Sept 1996.



BOTH PICTURES: NEWSFLASH

ANGLE: [Left] Retired soldier Frank Wilson was out fishing with friends when he saw his 'Nessie' [right] which made a whoosh sound, swam on the surface for about 300yds then rolled and dived



YOU'VE BEEN FRAMED: Ian Finlayson grabbed his camera and shot two minutes of footage of a snake-like object moving through the waters of Loch Ness. His wife Vera thinks it was a giant eel

STRANGE DEATHS

A SHEEP TO be sacrificed for the Muslim feast of Al-Adha rushed his executioner, who lost his balance and fell to his death from the top of a four-storey building in Cairo. *Sunday Telegraph, 20 April 1997.*

HELMUT MEZER, 18, from Austria, died in a high-speed car crash one week after getting his new driving licence and a BMW with the number plate DEAD 1. The car skidded on a bend at 100mph (161kmph), hit a bank and catapulted through the air more than 200ft (60m) before landing on its roof in a field. Mezer was killed instantly and a friend in the passenger seat was seriously injured. *London Eve. Standard, 24 Mar 1997.*

A 51-YEAR-OLD MAN died on 25 February after falling into a mincing machine he was cleaning. He was trapped in the machine for two hours after the accident at Beni Foods, Tongwell, Milton Keynes. *Huddersfield Daily Examiner, 26 Feb 1997.*

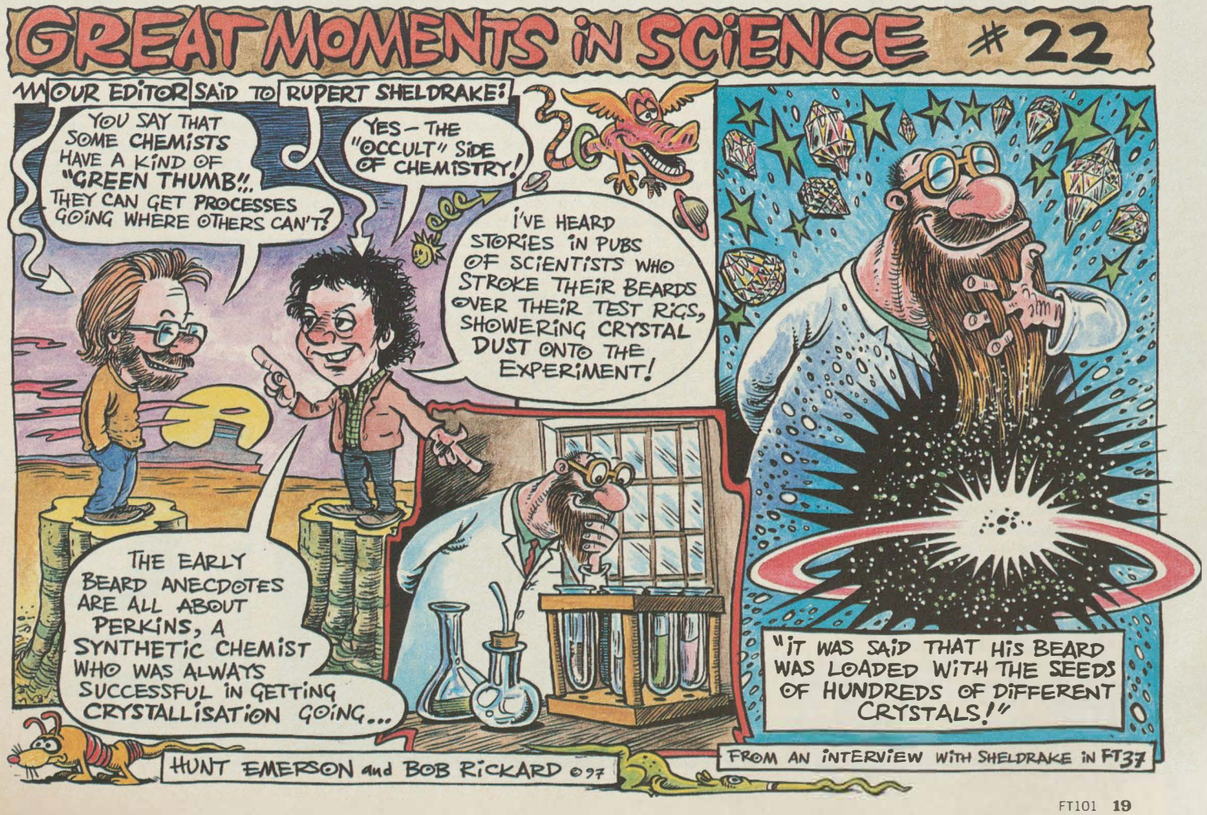
A JOBLESS MAN who died after he become addicted to television appeared to have lost the will to live. Andrew Thomas, an otherwise apparently healthy 27-year-old from Maerdy, South Wales, was made redundant from a supermarket in 1992. When he failed to get another job, he spent every waking moment of the next four years in front of the TV and he would get dressed only once a week when he went to sign on for his benefits. The day before he died he got out of bed at noon and watched TV for 14 hours. He was found dead in bed the next morning. Within a week of his death, two job offers had arrived in the post. A pathologist told the inquest that the cause of death was "unascertainable". A verdict of death by natural causes was recorded. *Times, D.Telegraph, D.Mail, Mirror, 19 April 1997.*

TWIN CROATIAN brothers committed suicide on the same day without each other knowing. Branko Uhiltil, 57, hanged himself in his house in Lipovljani, 50 miles (80km) east of Zagreb; two hours later, his brother Ivan shot himself dead in his flat. *Aberdeen Eve. Express, 24 Mar 1997.*

TWO MEN WHOSE bodies washed ashore in Monmouth County, New Jersey, on 3 April shared a birthday the following day. Robert Wolf of Highlands would have been 24 and Jesse Bostik of Asbury Park, 81. Wolf's body was found in Eagles Nest Bay and Bostik about eight miles (13km) south. Both drowned. *Newark (NJ) Star Ledger, 5 April 1997.*

HAVING GIVEN a speech to a toastmasters' club in Johannesburg in which he advised his audience to "enjoy life while you can, because death could strike at any moment," Danny du Toit, 49, collapsed and choked to death. *Guardian, 4 Mar 1997.*

GILLIAN COUPLAND



HE POPS UP ALL OVER THE IVORY COAST, DAZED AND CONFUSED, AND THE PRIESTS BELIEVE THAT HE IS POSSESSED BY AN EVIL SPIRIT. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE GIVE YOU... TELEPORTING BOY

TRAVELLING AT THE SPEED OF THOUGHT

On 18 August 1993, the diminutive figure of N'Doua Kouamé Serge, nine, arrived at the Catholic church of Saint-Augustin in Yamoussoukro on the Ivory Coast, where he was received by the seminarist Koumoué Kouadio J Clement. "We noticed him just before lunch," Clement later told Kambiré Elie of the paper *Ivoir'Soir* (7 September 1993). "He was in the yard in front of our building. I asked him who he was and where he was from, but he didn't answer." Clement consulted with his superior Father Emile Kouakio, who suggested that he feed the child with some bread and butter secretly laced with a few drops of holy water. Although no explanation was given for this procedure, the dutiful Clement did what was recommended and the child ate his fill and left, only to return later that evening. Being hospitable Christians, they again offered him food and shelter for the night, both of which were gladly accepted by the child. They decided to lodge him in the church's storehouse and, before locking him in for the night, Father Kouakio made him wear a cross and rosary.

"The Father blessed the cross but forgot to bless the rosary," said Clement, "and the results were inexplicable. Next morning at dawn Serge had vanished from his bed and was no longer in the storehouse." He was nowhere to be found. Then the watchman, who had initially discovered that the child had disappeared, returned and said that he had found him sleeping in the priest's car, which was locked. They hurried to investigate and found the boy peacefully curled on the back seat. "I had to go and find the keys to open the door," said the astonished seminarist. The missionaries interrogated the boy, who revealed that while he had been asleep a strangely-shaped being with a burned face had appeared to him at about 2am and had taken him to a large house. Here another entity with wings came to his assistance. The two creatures fought, the winged being won and its adversary burned up. It then placed the child in the car where it rubbed his forehead with an ointment, dipped his rosary in water and placed it around his neck. Serge's account of events was interpreted by Father Kouakio as being a struggle between an angel and a demon caused by his omission to bless the rosary the previous evening. In a further twist, the watchman related that during the night (at about 2am) he was woken by the horn of the priest's car. However, he discovered the vehicle empty although all its lights were turned on. (It is not explained why he did not wake someone to get the car keys and turn off the lights.)

The following day, 19 August, Clement asked the watchman to keep an eye upon the boy as he breakfasted. "Suddenly he came running to say that the boy had miraculously vanished. He said he'd turned his back for a moment, and that when he'd turned round there was no trace of the boy," said Clement. Later when they had rediscovered the wayward Serge, they questioned him as to this second disappearance. He replied that as he was finishing his breakfast, he had heard shouts of children outside and wanted to go and play with them, and yet when he found himself passing in front of the church, a mysterious force had pulled him inside. There he saw a red light which had hypnotized him for several minutes, rooting him to the spot. He heard voices, possibly speaking in Arabic (or Hebrew). The force then left him and he was able to leave the church.

It was these events that piqued Father Kouakio's interest in the boy, and led him to discover the extraordinary journey that preceded his arrival at the church of Saint-Augustin. With the assistance of the reporter Kambiré Elie, the Father discovered that Serge's last port of call had been the house of Commissaire Kassi Edgard Eloh in the same town (Yamoussoukro), where he had stayed for two weeks. They learned from the Commissaire that Serge had arrived from Duékoué, some 155 miles (250km) away. He'd been found wandering the streets, confused, and had been taken to the local police station. With the boy's assistance, they were able to trace an uncertain topography of his travels, although no clear sequence of events could be established.

BEAM ME AROUND: [Above]: 'Teleporting boy' N'Doua Kouamé Serge and [left] the Ivory Coast towns in which he appeared

Serge's first instance of "mysterious flight" as he calls it, occurred in 1989 when he was only five years old and living with his father in Tiassalé. Here, while playing football with his friends, he had fallen, injured himself and was being transported to hospital when he suddenly found himself in San Pédro, a distance of 200 miles (320 km) away by road. Upon his discovery (the details of which are unspecified), his father went to collect him, but the boy 'jumped' once more, this time finding himself 410 miles (660 km) away in the town of Odienné. From this point it appears that Serge, through no will of his own, became a teleporting nomad appearing in a series of towns including Duékoué, Arrah, Dimbokro, Séguéla and Abidjan.

At Arrah, Serge had stayed with one Adou Kouamé, Director of the Paul VI College, who gave the investigators the name of Serge's father, and asked them to study the boy's wrist in order to confirm the original tale of his football injury. Kambiré Elie in his report for *Ivoir'Soir* mentions that he did indeed find a swelling of the child's wrist when he examined him.

From a telephone number given to the two investigators by the boy himself, they then contacted Prefect Djabia of Séguéla from whom they pieced together the most perplexing episode of Serge's journey. Prior to his arrival in Séguéla the boy had stayed with a Mr and Mrs Bilé, both ranking members of the Charismatic Renewal sect in the town of Dimbokro some 225 miles (360 km) away by road, or 170 miles (275 km) as the crow (or boy?) flies. Upon finding the boy (again the circumstances of which are undisclosed), Mrs Bilé, echoing the previous actions of Serge's father, got into her car and drove to Prefect Djabia's house to pick him up. Unfortunately on her return journey to Dimibokro her car crashed and she was killed. No evidence of Serge's presence was reported – indeed, at the time of the accident, Serge was seen inside a car in the Riviera district of Abidjan, 146 miles (235km) away. Three days later, witnesses said that Serge had reversed a car out of a garage in the Riviera district before he was stopped. They said he seemed beside himself, as if possessed by a spirit or an extraordinary supernatural force.

A STRANGE BEING WITH A BURNED FACE APPEARED TO HIM AT 2am

What actually happened to Serge during that journey with Mrs Bilé, and his subsequent appearances in Abidjan, is unclear. When interviewed by Kambiré Elie regarding these events his replies were vague. On the nature of his travelling he would only comment: "I don't know. I'm here, and suddenly I find I'm in another town. I have to ask to find out where I am." However, he had clear plans. "I want to stay here with the priests and become a priest one day." Father Kouakio expressed a traditional Catholic view of Serge's teleportations: "I believe he is possessed by a demon, an evil spirit which suddenly teleports him. A power in the service of evil. Proof is the story of the death of the lady who came to fetch him back and all the other ill-omened events in the life of this child" (although these are not specified in Elie's report). He added: "I think the curse is lifted for the time being."

It is possible that Serge could be an extremely clever and manipulative child with a passion for motorised vehicles (the questionable instances of his apparent evasion of the watchman and what would appear to be attempted car theft in Abidjan appears to support this idea). And yet certain aspects of this report simply do not add up. Why, for instance, did Father Kouakio suggest that the boy's food should be laced with holy water and that he should take a rosary to bed with him? Also, regarding the nature of his travel (if it was anything other than teleportation): Where was he getting the money from if he was using public transport? And why were relative strangers willing to travel such great distances to recover him? Perhaps in light of his chosen future career, Serge has decided for the moment to take a vow of silence.

Translation by Ion Will. Adaptation by Jonathan Bryant.

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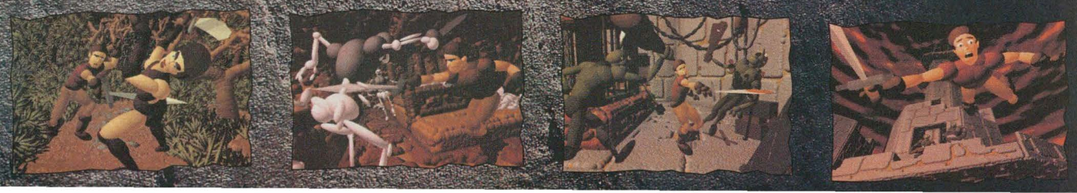

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WATCH OUT BIGCAT ABOUT

THERE WERE REPORTS OF ALIEN BIG CATS (ABCs) PROWLING ACROSS MOST AREAS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 1996. PAUL SIEVEKING ASSEMBLES THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER REPORTS FOR HIS ANNUAL SURVEY

ABC sightings came from 34 English counties last year, with Yorkshire and East Anglia being particular hives of activity. Of course, many press reports will not have come to our attention and only a small proportion of sightings get into the papers anyway. While the Beast of Bodmin didn't feature much (perhaps journalists had tired of the blanket coverage after the 1995 Government report), four other alliterative beasts made their appearance: the Beast of Bennachie in Scotland, the Beast of Ballymeana in Northern Ireland, the Beast of Broomhill in Yorkshire and the Beast of Bont in Wales. The latter is taken very seriously by the farmers around Aberystwyth, who continue to lose a lot of sheep. On 3 April 1997, Cynog Dafis, the local MP, said: "There is a fair consensus that a puma or black leopard is at large and that there might be more than one."

On the night of 23 January 1996, a beast of some kind made a frenzied attack on a Range Rover in the village of Brookmans Park in Hertfordshire, quite close to the London suburbs. Madelaine Dinsmore had parked the dark green vehicle close to her front door and she had her husband heard nothing during the night. The hard rubber of the front bumper was chewed and shredded and their were bits of rubber all over the drive. There were muddy paw marks and deep scratches on the paintwork and the brake-lines were severed.

[L and R] ABC caught on video next to the B3267 at Portgaverne, Cornwall. [Centre] This sign appeared outside Ipswich when ABCs were reported

On Leap Day (29 February), David Coles photographed a giant black cat in undergrowth by the Queen Elizabeth II reservoir in Walton, Surrey. Surrey, of course, is the home of the first ABC to get a nickname: the Surrey Puma. Then on 19 July, Richard Hunt, a London policeman, caught an ABC on video at St Ives Bay Holiday Park near Hayle in Cornwall. It was about 300 yards (275m) away, crossing dunes, and passed within 20ft (16m) of a caravan. A few days later, on 7 August, an ABC was seen at Hayle from a distance of 20 yards (18m) with a rabbit in its mouth. One of the three witnesses was a zoo keeper from Durham.

On 15 August, the remains of a badly decomposed cat, about 3ft (90cm) long, was found near the River Dearne on Cat Hill, Darfield, near Barnsley. According to ancient legend, a man was killed in the church porch in nearby Barnburgh by a huge wild cat, which also died when the injured man fell on top of it. The Cat Hill denouément, however, was disappointing: a month later, Dr Andrew Kitchener, curator of mammals at the Royal Museum in Edinburgh, said the cadaver was nothing more than a fat domestic cat.

Despite their supposed retiring nature, several ABCs ventured into urban areas: evident from a number of reports from the suburbs of Ipswich, Suffolk, in the summer as well as from Chester, Colchester, Gloucester, Stratford-upon-Avon and some London suburbs. On

J & MJ BRYANT

PAUL PINN

ERIC ROBERTS

Anne Suter, environmental health animal welfare technician with Welwyn and Hatfield council, examines the chewed bumper from Madelaine Dinsmore's Range Rover in Brookmans Park, Hertfordshire. "My theory is that we are dealing with a large cat," she said, "possibly a puma."

17 November, a massive black cat was seen at St John's College School in Cambridge by caretaker Nigel Clarke; head groundsman Jim Williams saw it again the next day some 30ft (9m) away. Meat was hung from a tree and it disappeared overnight. A neighbouring college gardener reported unusually large paw prints; and about six months earlier, Girton College porters saw an ABC on college lawns. The so-called 'Fen Tiger' has been seen for 15 years, but previously in more rural Cambridgeshire settings.

Perhaps the closest ABC encounter in 1996 took place on Salisbury Plain around 19 March. Jonathan and Matthew Sloggett, 12-year-old twin sons of Rev Don Sloggett of Upavon, were playing in fields about 80 yards (73m) from the vicarage garden. As dusk fell, they rolled up their play telephone (yoghurt cartons joined with twine) and prepared to return home.

Noticing a strong smell, they turned round to be confronted, about 4 yards (3.7m) away, by a large dark grey cat the size of an alsatian with a thick tail that reached the ground. It leapt from the shadows and grabbed the twine, pulling it tight around Matthew's arm, snarling all the time. Jonathan ran up and gave the animal a hefty kick in the side. It released the string and sank its teeth into the zipper of his coat. He hit it on the nose with the palm of his hand, the zip broke in its teeth and the boys made a run for it. The animal chased them back to the vicarage, twice grabbing the trailing string in its mouth. The family boxer dog, Jemma, fled and cowered in a corner.

When Rev. Sloggett arrived home from evensong, he found his panic-stricken sons in the driveway. It took them an hour to calm down sufficiently to relate what had happened. Shown pictures of various wild animals, each pointed to a puma. The vicar took plaster casts of some 4in (10cm)-wide pawprints to Bristol Zoo, but they were too indistinct to identify. According to a keeper at the zoo, the sound the brothers described the cat as making indicated that it was either a puma or caracal, a relative of the lynx.

The vicar had scoffed at earlier sightings of the animal in the area, including some by his own daughter Rachel, 15, when she was out riding. However, the boys' account was "particularly convincing". Jonathan had been left with a bruise on his arm he said had been made by the animal's tail.

MEANWHILE, IN NORTHERN IRELAND

On 17 February, marksmen from the Royal Ulster Constabulary shot dead an African caracal lynx, prowling close to sheep in Fintona. It was wearing a black collar and was thought to be an escaped pet. It had been seen twice two days earlier, when it was thought to be a "lion cub". No local animal collector confessed to ownership. Hours later, police cornered and shot another animal, thought to be a domestic cat living in the wild in the same area. On 20 February, the "Beast of Ballymeana" was sighted in Kells, Co. Antrim. Inquiries uncovered two other recent sightings. A week later, the sightings were thought to be of a large domestic cat called Dylan.

Somewhat surprisingly, the Dangerous Wild Animals Act of 1976 does not apply in Northern Ireland. In theory, anyone in the province can keep a tiger in their back garden. In October 1995, an Arctic wolf escaped from its owner in Lisnaskea, Co. Fermanagh, and was shot dead eight days later.

GERRY KNIGHT

GOOD CAT-CH: Officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary with the caracal lynx they shot on 17 February 1997

FORTEAN TIMES 1996 NATIONWIDE ABC SURVEY

AS IN PREVIOUS ROUND UPS, THE MAJORITY OF WITNESSES ROUND THE COUNTRY DESCRIBE A LARGE BLACK CAT, ABOUT THE SIZE OF A LABRADOR, 18in TO 2ft 6in (45cm–80cm) TALL, WITH A BODY 2-4ft (60–120cm) IN LENGTH, AND A LONG TAIL. IF THE DESCRIPTION IS RADICALLY DIFFERENT, THE DETAILS ARE NOTED. TO SAVE SPACE, MEASUREMENTS ARE GIVEN IN IMPERIAL UNITS ONLY. FOR THE 1994 LISTINGS, SEE *FT80:37*; FOR THE 1995 LISTINGS, SEE *FT88:28*.

BEDFORDSHIRE

30 Jan – Crossing A5 at Hockcliffe. Also seen recently in Totternhoe, Wing Hill, and Linslade. **1 Feb** – Nr Stanbridge. Sandy coloured.

BERKSHIRE

1 Feb – Haymill Valley Nature Reserve, Britwell. Dark brown. **12 June** – Slough.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

May – Milton Keynes. **June** – Newton Blossomville. Westcroft, Milton Keynes. Six further sightings in the area. **27 July** – outside Newport Pagnell. **17 Nov** – Marlow.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Feb – Willingham. **May** – Lonstanton. **4 Nov** – Cambridge. Seen at about 15ft. **17 Nov** – St Johns College School, Cambridge (see intro).

CHESHIRE

17 May – Chester outskirts. Brown, tiger-like animal. Police found corpse of large fox nearby, but witness adamant he had seen a big cat cross road in front of his car. **July** – Knutsford.

CLEVELAND

27 Aug – Seaton Carew. Two seen on seafront around midnight.

CORNWALL

11 Jan – Lower Locrenton, East Looe Valley, nr St Keyne Well Hotel. Grey-blue ABC seen at 15yds. Tuft of fur collected from hedge and sent for identification. **19 July** – St Ives Bay Holiday Park, Upton Towans, Hayle. ABC filmed (see intro). **7 Aug** – Hayle (see intro). **Sept** – Saltash. Ginger ABC seen for second time in fortnight. Hayle. Seen at 30yds. Pendeen. **3 Nov** – Godolphin.

CUMBRIA

April – Brough Sowerby common. Six sightings. Remains of lamb and deer found.

DERBYSHIRE

Feb – Shuckstone Lane, Crich, nr Ripley (believe it or not). Lower Hartshay (two days running). Chellaston and Wirksworth. **April** – Ripley (four times, one at 10yds by two 15-year-old boys camping). **May** – Cotmanhay, Crich, Belper, Coxbench and Langley Mill, Ilkeston. **24 July** – Ilkeston. **Sept** – Mapperley and Smalley.

DEVON

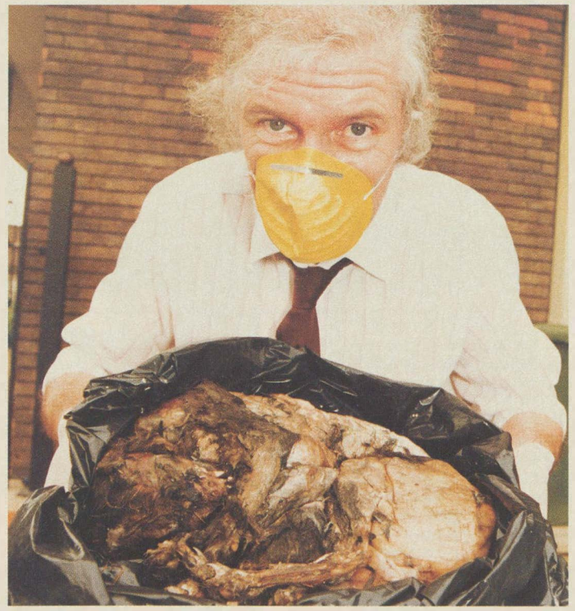
Jan – Watertown. Racoon-like creature, twice the size of domestic cat, dark brown, with tapered ears. Long straight tail with alternating white and dark rings an inch wide. **Mar** – Holne. **July** – Dartmoor, between Two Bridges and Princetown. Haldon, nr Ashcombe Cross. **Aug** – nr Newton Abbot.

DORSET

Late May – West Bay, nr Bridport. **Sept** – Burton Bradstock. Three times size of an alsatian. Ashington. Seen at 200yds.

ESSEX

Jan – Abberton Reservoir, south of Colchester. Dark fawn ABC, thought to be a mountain lion, seen at Tolleshunt Knights and Great Wigborough. Black ABCs seen in Mersea Road in Colchester, Tiptree, Layer Breton, Rowhedge, Fingringhoe, Stanway, West Mersea, Peldon (large footprints in snow), Braiswick and Birch (seven sheep and a goat mutilated). More than 17 6in-wide pawprints with extended claws found in mud, clay and concrete close to the sea wall at Coopers Beach Holiday Park, East Mersea. **Feb** – Colchester, Great Horkesley, Sudbury, Langenhoe (sighting plus footprints) and nr Bucklesham (prints). **24 Mar** – Finchingfield. Sighting and pawprints. **11 April** – nr Tiptree. Seen at 50yds. **May** – Braintree, nr Capel Hill golf course; and nr Rayne. **15 June** – fields nr Halstead town centre. Charcoal grey, seen at 30yds. **c.7 Aug** – Arlesford. **5 Nov** – Galleywood. Two sightings of brownish ABC.



SHEFFIELD NEWSPAPERS

Colin Howes, keeper of natural history at Doncaster Museum, with the fetid feline found near Cat Hill, Darfield, Yorkshire. What he first thought had a cat-like head on a dog-like body, was a domestic moggie

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Late April – nr River Severn at Elmore Back. Recent sightings in Saul, Upton-St-Leonards, Haresfield and Cranham. **May** – Robinswood Hill nature reserve, nr Gloucester. **10 July** – nr Barnwood. Seen at 15yds. **30 Oct** – nr Gloucester. Sighting by farmer and pawprint. **15 Nov** – Edge, nr Stroud. Sharkey, a Shar Pei or Chinese fighting dog caught. At first thought to be another Shar Pei called Eric who had been running wild on Robinswood Hill for a year. It was claimed (unconvincingly) that witnesses had been mistaking the dogs for ABCs.

HAMPSHIRE

c.22 Jan – Hayling Island. Possible jungle cat seen at 20yds. A jungle cat was killed by a car on the island in 1988. **May** – Totton and nr Botley. **17 July** – Worthy Down, nr Southampton. **13 Nov** – Pagham. Droppings collected for study.

HERTFORDSHIRE

23 Jan – Brookmans Park. Attack on Range Rover (see intro).

ISLE OF WIGHT

14 Jan – Steyne Copse, Bembridge. Another sighting in Seaview the previous December.

KENT

31 Mar – Marden. Sighting plus clawed paw prints. **July** – Selling. **Oct** – Bonnington. Mersham, nr Ashford (six Surrey sheep were bitten on the throat and torn to pieces and two more disappeared over 10 days.) **20 Nov** – Hicks Forstal Road, nr Herne Bay. **5 Dec** – Leybourne.

LEICESTERSHIRE

28 Jan – Rothley. One sheep killed and 15 severely injured by a mystery beast. Very large paw print in snow. Three sheep killed and three badly injured in Thurcaston about 10 days earlier. **Feb** – Coalville. Seen at 10yds. **Mar** – Cropston. 14 lambs killed, possibly by dogs.

LINCOLNSHIRE

April – Owmby-by-Spital. **May** – Kingerby, nr Market Rasen. The 'Lindsey Leopard' seen peering through window of witness. Sighting in nearby woodland two weeks earlier. Horncastle. Scotter Common. **17 May** – Skellingthorpe Road, Lincoln. Seen 20ft from their patio, caught in beam of security lights, by parents of *Eastenders* actress Letitia Dean. Sightings in Skellingthorpe, Birchwood and Eagle about the same time. **29 Sept** – Normanby-by-Spital. 1995 sightings in Lincoln, Gainsborough, Laughton Forest, Owmby, Caenby Corner, Newark and Market Rasen.

LONDON

c.6 Feb – Potters Bar. **May** – The Ridgeway, Enfield. **June** – Gunnersbury Park. Brownish ABC seen at 40yds. Southgate. Winchmore Hill (see ***FT75:11***). Northolt. Brown ABC disappeared into the undergrowth of the railway embankment. Doug Richardson of London Zoo suggested it was a mountain lion, matching the description of an ABC seen near Northolt station in 1994. **16 July** – Northolt. **5 Aug** – Ham Lands towpath, Twickenham, opposite Eel Pie Island.

GREATER MANCHESTER

Aug – Lancashire Hill estate, Stockport. Seen at 50yds. There was a sighting at Knutsford two weeks earlier. South Reddish. Sighting by Peter Bowden, 49. As he walked away, a figure in a black hooded cloak and carrying a long bow jumped out of the long grass and swung a sword about. Mr Bowden was "scared to death".

NORFOLK

19 Feb – North Walsham road nr Crostwick, Norwich. Seen at 25ft. **5 Mar** – A11 nr Attleborough. Seen at 200yds by motorist and policeman. **23 April** – Horsham St Faith. Seen by church at 30yds. **9 June** – Claxton, nr Norwich. Brown ABC. **July** – Rackheath, nr Norwich. Rusty brown ABC. Roughton, nr Cromer and 4 miles away nr Suffield. Lingwood. **Aug** – Hempton, nr Fakenham. South Lopham (large pawprints). Waveney Park, Diss (large pawprints). **16 Oct** – Twyford. **24 Nov** – Colkirk, nr Fakenham.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

August – Desborough. **18 Sept** – Corby. Nov – Easton-on-the-hill, nr Stamford. Geddington: two 30lb geese taken from nearby farm on 14 and 16 Nov, and a few bones and feathers found in field. **15 Dec** – Rothwell.

NORTHUMBERLAND

2 Jan – Hepplewoodside. Seen at 15yds. **Feb** – Alnwick Castle grounds and Cramlington. **30 May** – Alnwick. **c.20 June** – Bamburgh. **7 July** – Hulne Park, Alnwick. **Late Sept** – Shilbottle. **c.16 Nov** – Harwood Forest, nr Otterburn. A week earlier, people in nearby Cambo reported hearing strange calling noises at night.

OXFORDSHIRE

March – Stonesfield. Several sightings. **23 June** – Berrick Salome, nr Wallingford. ABC stalked witness in a field behind Parsonage Farm. A nearby farm reported lost lambs.

SOMERSET

23 June – Cocklake, nr Wedmore. Seen at 40yds. **Sept** – Clayhidon. Two sightings. **Early Nov** – Chilthorne Domer.

STAFFORDSHIRE

14 April – Measham. Sightings in Moira, Blackfordby and Overseal in recent years. **8 June** – Marklews Pool, Brownhills. Dark brown ABC. **Dec** – Brownhills. Angora goat killed and partially eaten.

SUFFOLK

3 Mar – Assington, nr Sudbury. And a farmer in Wormingford believed she had lost 16 pullets to the beast. **5 Mar** – Shelley. Seen at 400yds. **21 April** – Martlesham, between the Foxhall and Seven Hills roundabouts. Seen at 30yds. **June** – Several sightings in Foxhall, Martlesham and Rushmere. Ipswich, on the old A12 bypass. Foxhall Rd, Ipswich (huge pawprints). Hollesley (four sheep mutilated). Kesgrave (seen at 15ft). Shotley peninsula. **July** – Felixtowe (brown ABC). Stansfield (seen at 30yds). Hartest, nr Bury St Edmunds. Seen at 20yds. Glemsford, nr Long Melford. Rushmere Heath. Also bloody pawprints found in Rushmere Rd, Ipswich. Weymouth Rd, Ipswich. Martlesham. Seen at 20ft. **c.20 Aug** – Wortham Ling. "Lioness" sighted. **c.28 Nov** – Kelly Rd, Ipswich.

Pawprints left in wet concrete at the at an East Mersea, Essex, caravan park on 30 January

EAST ANGLIAN DAILY TIMES

SURREY

Feb – St George's Hill, Weybridge. Walton. ABC photographed (see intro). **9 April** – Staines. **31 Oct** – Farnham.

SUSSEX

15 April – Dormans Park, nr East Grinstead. Pawprint found. Several earlier sightings of "lynx" in the area. **19 May** – Dormans Park. ABC chased witness, who jumped in his car. **20 June** – Dormans Park. **20 Aug** – Ansty. Seen at 150yds. **13 Nov** – Pagham, nr Bognor. Seen at 100yds by a resident and two police officers.

WARWICKSHIRE

Aug – Alveston Manor Hotel, Stratford-upon-Avon. Four sightings of a "lion". **30 Nov** & **1 Dec** – Claverdon. Two chicken coops on neighbouring farms torn apart and 55 chickens consumed. Large scratch marks on the doors.

WILTSHIRE

9 Jan – Britford, nr Salisbury. Three ewes savaged to death; blunt claw marks suggested dog rather than ABC. **c.19 Mar** – Upavon, Salisbury Plain. ABC close encounter (see introduction). **13 July** – Erlestoke, nr Devizes. **9 Nov** – Quidhampton.

WORCESTERSHIRE

Mar – Kidderminster and in an orchard 20 miles away at Astwood Bank, nr Redditch.

YORKSHIRE

3 Jan – Cayton. **16 April** – Penistone Rd, New Mill, nr Huddersfield. Seen at 50yds by three witnesses, including a policeman. **29 July** – Ryedale area. Many sightings around Hovingham Shackleton, Slingsby, Terrington, Levisham nr Pickering, Cloughton and Clayton nr Scarborough. Lambs and sheep savaged in a distinctive way. The predators have a 4in teeth span, far bigger than a dog. **Aug** – Bluestone, between Walkington and Little Weighton (pawprints found). Sighting of brown ABC at nearby North Cove. Fellbeck, nr Grantley (ginger ABC seen between Skell Dyke and Eavestone). Pateley Bridge. Cross Hills, nr Keighley. Cat remains found near Cat Hill (see intro). **30 Aug** – Eric Vawser, former chairman of Penistone Conservative Association, announced that, "several months ago" he had seen "the Beast of Broomhill" or "the Penistone Panther" near where the corpse was found in Darfield. **Sept** – Sherburn. Gateforth. Between West Haddlesey and Carlton, 2 miles from Gateforth.

SCOTLAND

c.23 Jan – Pitcaple. "Beast of Bennachie" sighted. Mar – Blebo Craigs, nr Cupar (three lambs found with large puncture marks in neck). St Andrews, Fife (11 lambs found dead). Lamington, Kildary, Easter Ross (sheep found stripped to the bones). **29 April** – Springfield, nr Cupar. Fifth sighting in the Cupar area in April. **May** – Culloden Moor (car damaged in collision with ABC. Elgin, Moray (two tan-coloured ABCs seen, one at 6ft). Pitcaple (sheep remains found by River Urie). Sorbie, Galloway. **8 Aug** – Greshop, Moray. Seen at midday sitting outside the Moray Coast Growers vegetable factory. **Dec** – between Aviemore and Ballater. Huntly, on the A96 between Elgin and Aberdeen.

WALES

Jan – Pontrhydfendigaid, Ceredigion. Sheep mutilated, blamed on the "Beast of Bont". Police marksmen combed Tywi Forest near Aberystwyth; about 50 sheep had been killed in the area since Oct 1995. The injuries were typical of big cats: frontal attacks with large claws on the neck and throat of the prey. Woodstock, on the main Cardigan–Haverfordwest road. Llangoedmor, nr Boncath. **c.22 Feb** – Silent Valley, nr Brynmawr, Gwent.

The full survey with precise dates can be found on the *Fortean Times* web site **www.forteantimes.com**

SOURCES

BEDS: Leighton Buzzard Herald, 1 Feb; Dunstable Gazette, 7 Feb. **BERKS:** Slough & Langley Express, 8+15 Feb; 7 Mar, 13 June. **BUCKS:** Milton Keynes Citizen, 1 Feb, 23+30 May, 6+13+20+27 June, 4 July. 1 Aug; Maidenhead Advertiser, 22 Nov; Police Review, 13 Dec. **CAMBS:** Cambridge Eve. News, 5 Jan, 19+21 Nov; Varsity, 22 Nov; Sunday Telegraph, 24 Nov. **CHESHIRE:** Liverpool Echo, 18 May; Chester Chronicle, 24 May; Manchester Eve. News, late July. **CLEVELAND:** Hartlepool Mail, 31 Aug. **CORNWALL:** Western Morning News, 13+17 Jan, 13+26 Feb, 6 April, 23 July, 23 Sept; Plymouth Eve. Herald, 15 Jan, Western Daily Press, 9 April; West Briton, 25 July; Cornishman, 25 July, 15 Aug, 12+19 Sept. 31 Oct, 9 Nov. Cornish Guardian, 12 Sept. **CUMBRIA:** Sunday Post, 28 April; West Cumbria News & Star, 8 May, 20 Aug. **DERBYS:** Alfreton & Ripley Echo, 9 Feb; Ripley and Heanor News, 9+16 Feb; Nottrngham Eve. Post, 21 Feb, 11+23 April, 30 May; Derbyshire Times, 22 Feb; Derby Eve. Telegraph, 28 Feb; Lincolnshire Echo, 24 April; Burton Mail, 30 May; Ilkeston Advertiser, 31 May, 26 July, Alfreton Trader, 27 Sept. **DEVON:** North Devon Journal, 25 Jan. Western Morning News. 29 Mar, 6+12 Aug. **DORSET:** Dorset Eve. Echo. 1 June, 9 Sept; Bournemouth Eve. Echo, 14 Sept. **ESSEX:** Colchester Eve. Gazette, 18+25+26+31 Jan, 5 Feb, 26 Mar, 15 April, 22 May, 18 June, 8 Aug. 11 Nov; East Anglian Daily Times, 19+20+31Jan, 6 Feb, 17 May; Essex Chronicle, 29 Mar. **GLOS:** Glos County Independent, 2 May; Glos Gazette, 3 May; Western Daily Press, 29 May, 21 Nov; Glos Citizen, 11 July, 5 Aug, 31 Oct, 16 Nov; Glos Echo, 12 July; Express, Birmingham Post, 16 Nov. **HANTS:** Portsmouth News, 23 Jan, 14 Nov; Southampton Daily Echo, 13+30 May, 18 July. **HERTS:** D.Telegraph, 24 Jan; D.Mail, 25 Jan. **ISLE OF WIGHT:** IOW County Press, 19 Jan, 2 Feb. **KENT:** Kent Today, 3 April; Kent Messenger, 4 April, 10 May; Dover Express, 9 May. 21 Nov; Canterbury Adscene, 12 July; Kent Today, 12-18 Nov, 5+18 Dec; Kentish Gazette, 21+28 Nov. **LEICS:** Loughborough Echo, 2 Feb, 29 Mar; Coalville Times, 31 May. **LINCS:** Lincs Echo, 3+7+18+24+27+28 May, 30 Sept; Eastern Daily Press, 20 May. D.Mail, 22 May; Scunthorpe Eve. 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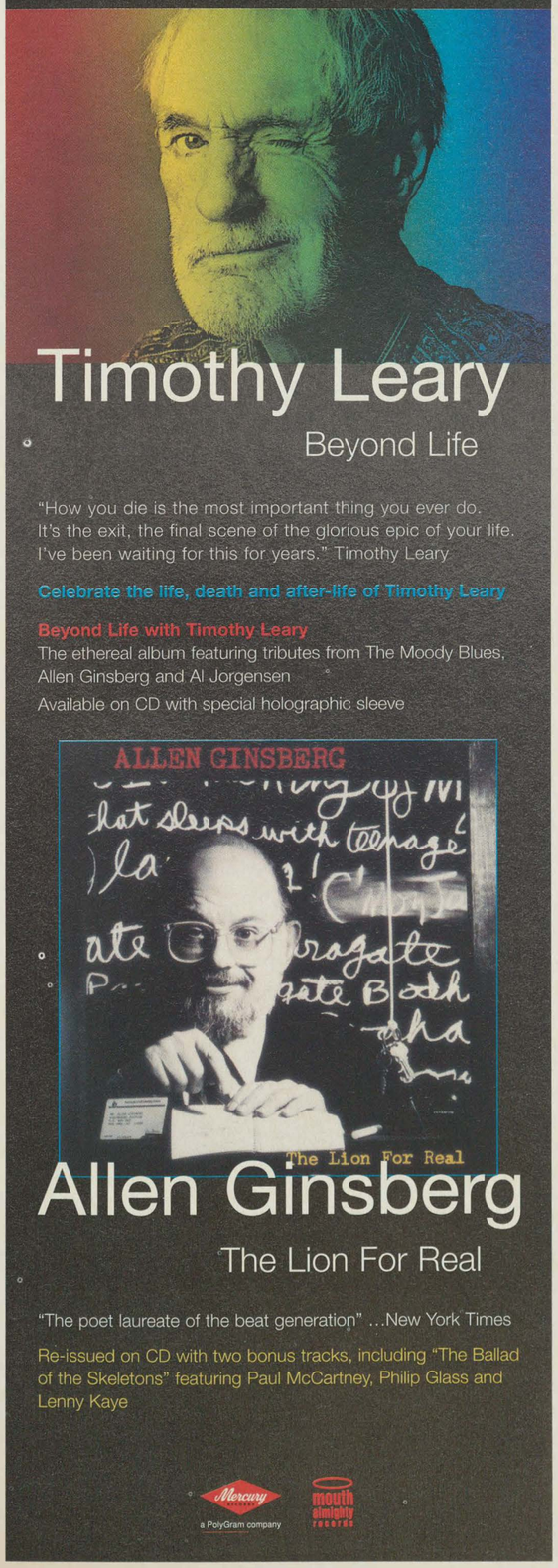

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VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

RENNES-LE-CHATEAU REVISITED

WHEN A VILLAGE PRIEST SPLASHES OUT MILLIONS ON ENTERTAINMENT AND BUILDING WORKS, QUESTIONS ARE ASKED: WHAT SECRET DID HE UNCOVER DURING HIS NOCTURNAL EXCAVATIONS – BURIED TREASURE, THE BODY OF CHRIST? OR WAS HE FUNDED BY A MASONIC SECRET SOCIETY? LYNN PICKNETT AND CLIVE PRINCE INVESTIGATE

The remote village of Rennes-le-Chateau in the Languedoc is a mecca for mystery buffs and New Agers, a natural theme park for those who like their history murky and more than a little labyrinthine. With its one main street and fewer than 100 inhabitants, Rennes-le-Chateau attracts around 25,000 visitors a year – more each time another bestseller on The Mystery hits the bookstands.

Here we have undoubtedly the French Glastonbury (although considerably smaller and much more remote): groups of backpackers with beatific smiles intone 'Oms' outside (and occasionally inside) the infamous church, while arty British ex-pats – attracted to the mystery by the phenomenal bestseller *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (1982) by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln – bewilder the locals with their accents and their antics.

Curiously, what draws this earnest horde to Rennes-le-Chateau was originally a very simple story, although it has accumulated a mass of rumour, conflicting hypotheses and plain intellectually challenged theorising over the years.[1] It begins about 100 years ago with the strange activities and inexplicable wealth of the village priest, Francois Bérenger Saunière (1852–1917). Appointed to the parish in 1885, his salary was just 75 francs a month, but immediately after refurbishing the 11th-century church of St Mary Magdalene some six years later, he began spending money like a Lottery winner. Between then and his death he funded extensive refurbishment of the run-down church, complete with the now-famous bizarre decorations, which include: Stations of the Cross that incorporate many incongruous touches, such as a boy wearing a kilt; the words 'Terribilis est locus iste' ('This is a terrible place') inscribed over the entrance; and a hideous demon crouching just inside the porch. (In April 1996, its head was lopped off and stolen: it has been replaced, but the new version is a caricature of a caricature.)

OH, BROTHER: Alfred Saunière

HIS SALARY WAS JUST 75 FRANCS A YEAR, BUT HE SPENT AN ESTIMATED 23 MILLION OVER 20 YEARS

Saunière also bought a major part of the village land and constructed his own domaine on it, which included ornamental gardens, ramparts overlooking the valley, a folly-like library called the Magdala Tower and an imposing house called the Villa Bethania. Like a typical eccentric Victorian gentleman of leisure, he spent vast sums on his collection of stamps, books and even exotic animals for his own private menagerie. And of course, there were the wild parties... he would spend up to 160,000 francs a month on the most luxurious food and drink (importing rum from Martinique for example). The Abbé Saunière of that poverty-stricken parish was soon famous for his lavish entertaining: his guests included a future government minister, a Hapsburg archduke and the renowned opera singer – and famous hostess of Parisian occult salons – Emma Calve.

In all, it is estimated that Saunière spent 23million francs over a 20-odd-year period, and at the time of his death he was committed to spending a further 8million francs on ambitious building projects in the village (and on buying a motor car). He had several bank accounts, including one in Budapest.

Among the many activities that brought down the wrath of his superiors on Saunière's head were his nocturnal excavations in the churchyard and his long absences from the village on unknown missions. He was suspended from priestly duties, but when ordered to leave the village he refused to go, eventually dying there.

So, where did he get the money? There have been many theories, but none conclusive, including: a horde of treasure unearthed during renovations of the church, or parchments revealing some valuable secret he either sold or was paid not to reveal – or even that he used to blackmail the Vatican – or an object of legendary power such as the Ark of the Covenant or the Holy Grail itself. Other stories link Saunière with sinister occult groups such as the Priory of Sion (see panel on page 30).

Sceptics argue that there is no mystery: Saunière got his wealth through some dubious practice such as trafficking in Masses, and that's that. On the other hand, the basic story of a millionaire priest is the springboard for the sort of theories that enthusiastically mix Atlantis, extra-terrestrials and the Holy Grail. The most recent example of

OH, BROTHER: Bérenger Saunière

MAIN PHOTO OPPOSITE: SIMON MARSDEN

MAIN PHOTO: MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY INSET: CLIVE PRINCE

such grandiose theorising and economical research is *The Tomb of God* by Richard Andrews and Paul Schellenberger (1996), in which they reveal the great secret of Rennes-le-Chateau discovered by Saunière: Jesus himself is buried near the village.

Such a claim might appear sensational to the English-speaking world, but the French have heard it all before. In fact, there are at least three books arguing the same thing (although centring on different locations for Jesus' tomb, including under the village public toilet!). The methodology of those authors is highly questionable (see review in ***FT99:60***), being based on supposed 'geometric code' in the alleged parchments (see panel opposite) and paintings associated with the mystery that lead them to a specific location. And their interpretation of the mysterious phrase *pommes bleues* ('blue apples' – see facing panel) as local slang for grapes (which they in turn interpret as meaning the body of Jesus) is remarkable – especially as this ingenious bit of argot was news to all of the locals we knew.

Such unsubstantiated headline fodder fuels the sceptics' case, but let's not be too hasty. There *is* a mystery. In fact, everything that Saunière did to the village of Rennes-le-Chateau can be shown to embody definite esoteric and heretical principles.

After a 30-year period during which little new information emerged, there have been several recent discoveries that most British researchers seem to be unaware of.

For example, one still sees the famous photograph of Saunière that was taken in a Paris studio, illustrating books and talks – well, yes, it is a Saunière, but not *the* Saunière, as Alain Feral, a well known artist who lives in Rennes-le-Chateau, has recently demonstrated.[2] It's actually Alfred, our Saunière's brother (also a priest). Not a very significant point, you might think, but a lot hangs on it: that photograph is the best evidence for Saunière making a legendary visit to Paris (to consult with occultists).

The most tangible new discovery was the maquette (plaster model) Saunière had commissioned shortly before his death in 1917, but he died before it could be used to create the planned *objet* in bronze. This recently turned up in an antique shop where it was bought by André Douzet, a researcher into French esoterica. The maquette is of a landscape with hills and valleys, and is marked with several place names of the New Testament Jerusalem. Yet this is clearly not the landscape of the real Jerusalem, either ancient or modern, but possibly of somewhere in the vicinity of Rennes-le-Chateau.[3]

The authenticity of the maquette is controversial, although André Douzet claims to have documents that prove it is genuine. But even if it is, what does it mean? Perhaps, with the Biblical place names on the (supposed) landscape around the village, Saunière was toying with the idea of creating the New Jerusalem on his doorstep.

The priest's connections with esoteric groups are openly acknowledged in France – "It's no secret," they say with a Gallic shrug when discussing his involvement with an occult form of Freemasonry known as the Rectified Scottish Rite (hence the boy in the kilt in the Station of the Cross perhaps?) This Masonic organisation goes back to 18th-century groups that claimed to be the true line of the Knights Templar.

Enter Alfred Saunière, Bérenger's alcoholic brother. During his colourful clerical career he was tutor to the children of the Marquis de Chefdebien in Narbonne: members of this family had been closely associated with the Rectified Scottish Rite, and allied groups, since its creation in 1778. Was it a coincidence that Alfred was dismissed for stealing part of the Chefdebien archive?

In fact, the mystery was not exclusive to the Saunière family, but extended to other priests in the neighbourhood. Another priest, the elderly Antoine Gelis from nearby Coustassa, was murdered in genuinely mysterious circumstances. He, too, had much more money than could be accounted for. (However, there is no evidence at all to suggest, as do Andrews and Schellenberger in *The Tomb of God*, that Saunière and another local priest also met sinister ends.) So it seems that Saunière was just one of a larger group of priests linked to occult Masonic organisations – presumably with their own agenda – who it seems were being funded by an external agency. (And certainly Saunière, despite his wealth, had a very erratic cash flow: occasionally he ran out of funds completely.)

Were these priests being paid to carry out some research in the area? As we have seen, even when ordered to leave the village, Saunière stayed on – so it was clearly important for him to remain at his post for some reason.

Ironically, when we began researching European heresy for *The Templar Revelation* we were reluctant to include Rennes-le-Chateau, that cliché of a modern myth. But when we discovered that Saunière's preoccupations were actually the same as ours, we could hardly avoid it. The connection was Mary Magdalene. We were investigating the mysterious transmission of information from the *Gnostic Gospels* to various groups of 'heretics' in the Middle Ages. The standard academic line is that, because these texts were lost from the fourth century until their discovery at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1947, this earlier knowledge was unlikely to say the least. But we discovered that the devotees of the cult of Mary Magdalene knew what was in some of the *Gnostic Gospels* at least 600 years earlier.

Saunière was obsessed with the Magdalene: he called his library the Magdala Tower and his house the Villa Bethania – Bethany being the Biblical home of Mary Magdalene. He visited sites in Provence (several legends have her ending her days in the area) and Magdalene cult centres around Lyons. Was Saunière looking for a secret connected with Mary Magdalene?

Although there are no clearcut answers to this question, we are not alone in asking it. Several French researchers are also working along these lines.

It has been suggested that Saunière was looking for relics of the Magdalene herself, perhaps even her body.[4] If it strikes us as a grisly – and even irrelevant – object of desire, one only has to look at the extraordinary fervour attached to the (exceptionally well preserved) body of Eva (*Evita*) Peron to begin to understand the passion involved in such a quest. But it is more likely that Saunière and his colleagues were searching for something of wider significance.

Given that there is evidence that the Magdalene cult transmitted the *Gnostic Gospels*, which contained the explosive knowledge of her true status, could the priest of Rennes-le-Chateau have been looking for those forbidden books? Did he have good reason to think Gnostic texts were to be found in his parish? And did he find one or more of those long-lost, presumably controversial *Gnostic Gospels*?

We might never know the answer to these questions, but equally, after decades of wild surmise and little solid fact, the Saunière story is beginning to pick up again.

Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince are the authors of The Templar Revelation: Secret Guardians of the True Identity of Christ *to be published by Bantam Press on 14 August 1997.*

WHAT A WELCOME: [Main picture] The devilish statue erected by Saunière under the font in the church at Rennes-le-Chateau. [Inset] The new head replaced after a decapitation in April 1996

PRIORY OF SION – A SECRET ORDER OF MYTH MAKERS

The Rennes-le-Chateau mystery is inextricably entwined with that of the Priory of Sion (Prieuré de Sion), a secret society that claims a pedigree dating back to the 12th century and a close kinship with the Knights Templar. Among its claimed Grand Masters are Sir Isaac Newton, Leonardo da Vinci, Victor Hugo and Jean Cocteau.

Some sceptics dispute this history, saying that the Priory was only founded in 1956 by a group that included Pierre Plantard – but others go much further, arguing that the Priory has never existed except for a handful of fantasists. However, as usual in the twilight world of secret societies, nothing is as clearcut as that.

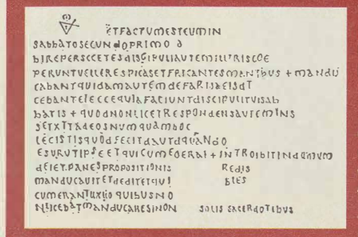
Our own experience has convinced us that today's Priory really does exist, and that it is both extensive and influential. And much of the claimed pedigree for some such society or tradition does stand up to scrutiny; however, it is by no means certain that today's Priory and that historical tradition are one and the same. It is also likely that the modern organisation is actually a front for some other society.

Certainly, Pierre Plantard and his associates have played a major part in promoting the Saunière mystery, but why? There is an intriguing link between the two men: one of the Toulouse occult circle that Saunière is said to have met was Josephin Peladan – godfather of the 19th-century Rosicrucian movement – and his secretary was Georges Monti, who was to become Pierre Plantard's mentor in the 1930s.

CODES AND CONUNDRUMS

More research hours are spent on the famous parchments than on any other aspect of the Saunière mystery, but it might well be time wasted. The story goes that the priest found several parchments in his church, two of which bore extracts from the New Testament in which very enigmatic coded messages had been hidden. The most famous – and wonderfully surreal – of these parchments runs thus:

Shepherdess no temptation that poussin teniers hold the key peace 681 by the cross and this horse of God I complete [or kill] this guardian demon at midday [or in the south] blue apples.



This text was first published in the 1960s and has appeared in many books since, notably *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. Not surprisingly, the consensus among Rennes researchers is that it's so weird it must mean something. However, in 1973 an associate of Pierre Plantard (see panel opposite), Philippe, Marquis de Cherisey admitted that he had created the parchments. Despite attempts to explain away this inconvenient confession by claiming he had merely copied them – just as true believers persist in ascribing otherworldly inspiration to crop circle fakers – the coded parchments might simply be brain teasers for the esoterically inclined.

BOTH PHOTOS: CLIVE PRINCE

ESOTERICA: [Above] Bas-relief altar piece in the church of St Mary Magdalene that replicates a stained-glass window in a nearby church, albeit with a bizarre deviation from the traditional version. [Left] The authenticity of Saunière's plaster model is questioned, as is its meaning. Could it be a blue print for a New Jerusalem?

THE PRIEST'S CONNECTIONS WITH ESOTERIC GROUPS ARE OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGED

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2. Alain Feral. Deux abbés Saunière a Rennesle-Chateau. *Association Terre de Rhedae Bulletin* October 1994; no. 8.

3. Details of the maquette, as well as the other discoveries made by Douzet and his fellow researchers, are published in the French journal *Cep d'Or de Pyla* (BP No. 1, 11100 Bages, France), particularly the special edition *Lumières nouvelles sur Rennesle-Chateau* (1995).

4. See the articles by Antoine Bruzeau in *Lumières nouvelles sur Rennesle-Chateau*.

THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

DAVID McGRORY PEERS THROUGH THE MISTS OF TIME TO A PERIOD WHEN GIANT WARRIORS RULED THE BRITISH ISLES, TOWERING ABOVE THE MASSES UNTIL THEY CHOPPED EACH OTHER'S HEADS OFF

Archæologists six months into a rescue dig in May 1969 at Stretton-on-Fosse, Warwickshire, came across a fourth- or fifth-century Saxon cemetery. The first find was the skeleton of a woman and over the following months, 30 other graves from the period following the break-up of the Roman Empire and the Saxon colonisation of Britain were unearthed.

Many of the graves contained the remains of women who were on average 5ft 3in tall and all, strangely, buried with their boots on. Everything pointed to the site being an average Saxon cemetery, except for the fact that among the dead lay buried a large number of men who, in the words of the archæologists in charge, were "very big chaps".[1]

These big chaps were buried as pagan warriors – with their shields over their heads and swords and spears at their sides. One was also buried with a ceremonial hanging bowl, which implies that he had high status. One skeleton, measured in situ at 6ft 10in (2.08m), was taken to Coventry's Herbert Art Gallery and Museum. The museum's keeper of archæology Brian Hobley, who had been in charge of the dig, told reporters that this was the smallest of the Stretton warriors, adding: "We hadn't a box big enough for a bigger one."[2] The remaining warriors were all 7–8ft (2.1–2.4m) tall.

Some years later, in Repton in Derbyshire, archæologists excavated a mound in the grounds of Repton vicarage. They unearthed the remains of 200 men and 50 women, which they thought might have been connected to the Viking army under Ivar the Boneless who wintered there in 873 AD.[3] As at Stretton-on-Fosse, the women – and many of the men – were small. However, a significant number of men were so big that the British Museum long bone boxes were too short to hold their thigh bones.

Carbon-testing of four of these large femurs dated them to 660–770 AD. A second pair was dated to between 770 AD and 870 AD, suggesting that the bones were not those of exceptionally tall Vikings, but of the long-established Saxon population. Due to the unusual circumstances of the burial – the mix of bones suggested a graveyard dumped in a mound – no evidence is available to prove that the Repton giants were like those at Stretton-on-Fosse.

The Stretton-on-Fosse warriors, buried with their status weapons and standing 6ft 10in–8ft (2.08–2.4m) tall, were not gangly, slow individuals, but well proportioned men capable of combat. The Repton giants probably also belonged to this group of giant warriors, who might have been royal guards or mercenaries living at various times over a period of three centuries.

Some local traditions seem to refer to such men. When the Saxons were making inroads

TALL: Utrecht Psalter's 9th-century illustration shows giant warriors at a Saxon manor house – or was he not very good at perspective?

into Britain from the east, it is believed they constructed the earthwork fortification Heydon Ditch at Heydon, Cambridgeshire. The ditch and nearby field have, for as long as anyone can remember, been reputedly haunted by spectres of giant warriors. In the 1950s, a number of graves were excavated which contained the remains of a number of "decapitated skeletons of tall Saxon warriors".[4] These soldiers had fallen foul of a practice, evidence of which has been found in cemeteries from at least the pre-Roman period: decapitation was an attempt to prevent the spirit of a "powerful and feared individual from haunting the living".[5] It appears that in this case, it didn't work.

Mythology and legends contain many references to giants, not only fee-fi-fo-fum types, but others that are more intriguing in the light of our giant Saxon warriors. One such figure is Bran, the legendary giant king of Britain, who, after a fatal wound, ordered his men to behead him and bury his head where the Tower of London now stands. Bran is a figure from mythology; however, Ewan Caesarius, who ruled Cumbria in the late fifth century, was a historical figure. Ewan – noted for his great height and obsession with bear hunting – was buried between two upright slabs 15ft (4.5m) apart in what is now the churchyard of St Andrew's Church in Penrith, Cumbria. When antiquarians exhumed the king in the 16th century, they found "the bones of a huge man".[6]

While Bran and Ewan were warrior kings, other stories tell of giant warriors fighting for kings. The 12th-century chronicler Walter Map informs us that a foreign warrior called Gado, "a huge man with a sprinkling of grey hairs" fought alongside King Offa (reigned 757–796 AD) at Colchester. Gado was always accompanied by other knights "conspicuous for their great stature".[7] If Map used older sources for his chronicles, the reference to Gado as "foreign" might simply have meant that he was not a Mercian.

In his diary, the Rev. Francis Kilvert relates a story from many centuries ago concerning a group of men at Cefyn y Blaen in Wales, each "seven feet high". What these seven-footers were doing there, history has not seen fit to record, but they fit in nicely with our search for ancient giant warriors.

One 'foreign' giant warrior died at Stamford Bridge in 1066. A huge Norwegian single-handedly held the narrow wooden bridge until he was speared from a boat underneath. A tale which dates from the time of the first Saxon incursions comes from Eynesbury in Cambridgeshire: a giant stood on Coneygear Field (the site of a Roman fort) near the river and hurled spears at another giant half a mile upstream at Seaton Socon.[8] If we take all 'giant' stories as mythology then that's the end of it, but if giant warriors existed in this period, then it begins to look more like a folk memory of a skirmish between them.

References to similar giants can be found in Lewis Spence's *The Minor Traditions of British Mythology*. He informs us that, in early times, a ruined edifice known as Hardon Hall near Stockport in Lancashire was "inhabited by a giant". This giant had a running feud with another giant who later "assembled his followers, attacked the enemy in his own stronghold and slew him, together with his retainers". Spence also mentions a Norman family called Comyn of Whitwick in Rutland who were popularly thought of as ghosts. Spence believed that a legend referring to the Comyns might have been "a genuine occurrence confused in popular legend with a band of giants who were thought of as dwelling in the neighbourhood". This reference is particularly interesting, as Spence seems to have no knowledge of the existence of the giant warriors.

Our final warrior comes from 10th-century Warwickshire; Guy of Warwick was said to have been born in Coventry and stood nearly 8ft tall (2.4m). A sword in Warwick Castle is said to be his, but is probably of 14th-century origin. Guy was a legendary warrior in the true sense of the word and fought in many battles and against many monstrous beasts.

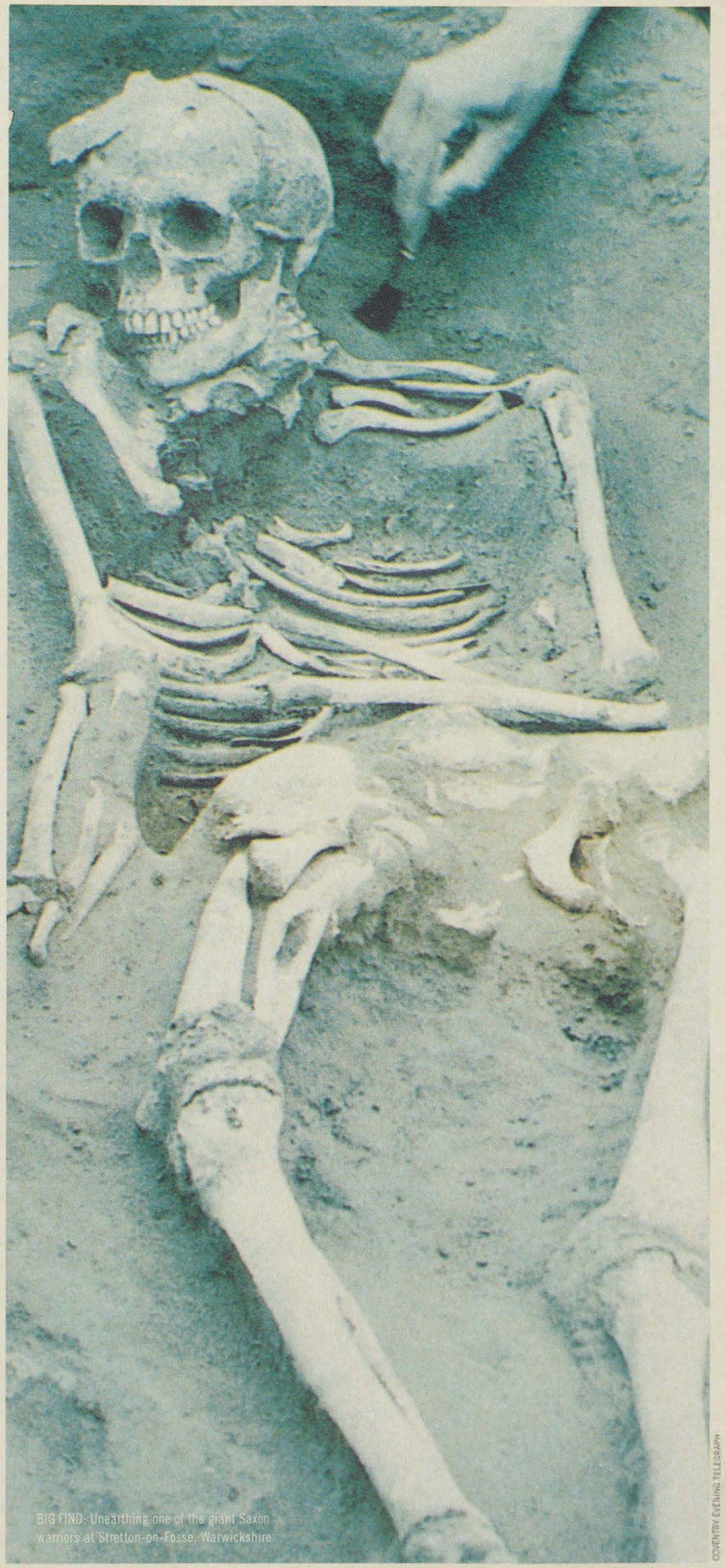
One story connected to Guy might have a grain of truth in it: Guy returned to England after fighting abroad; he was informed that King Athelstan was besieged at Winchester by a Danish army. It was arranged that the conflict would be decided by single combat to the death between Guy and the Danish champion, the giant warrior Colbrand. The two fought, and Colbrand was eventually brought to his knees and decapitated by Guy; the besieging army withdrew. Decapitation again...

During the reign of Athelstan (924–939 AD) the Danes *were* defeated on many occasions and Athelstan was styled 'King of All Britain'. There is no record of the king himself being besieged at Winchester, but the town was attacked by Danes later, in the reign of Æthelred. The actual combat between Guy and Colbrand is recorded as taking place outside Warwick, not Winchester. Guy might or might not be relevant to our case, but all evidence, no matter how improbable, needs to be considered.

So there we have it: Saxon giant warriors, not all from the land of fairy tales, but from ancient Britain in the period when the Roman Empire fell and Saxon, then Danish, invaders landed on our shores. It was an uncertain world of blood and battle which contained real warriors of exceptional size and uncertain origin. These men were capable of battle – not weak and slow, but highly mobile individuals who no doubt presented a fearsome sight, armed with sword, spear and shield. Their power was feared enough for ritual decapitation to take place. Their existence is lost in time, but remembered through folk history. Giant warriors did indeed walk our land.

FOOTNOTES

1, 2. *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 27 May 1969.
3 *Timewatch*, BBC Television, broadcast 8 Oct 1995.
4 *Folklore, Myths and Legends of Britain*, Reader's Digest
5, 6, 8 Martin Welch. *Anglo-Saxon England*. English Heritage
7 Jennifer Westwood. *Albion: A Guide to Legendary Britain*.

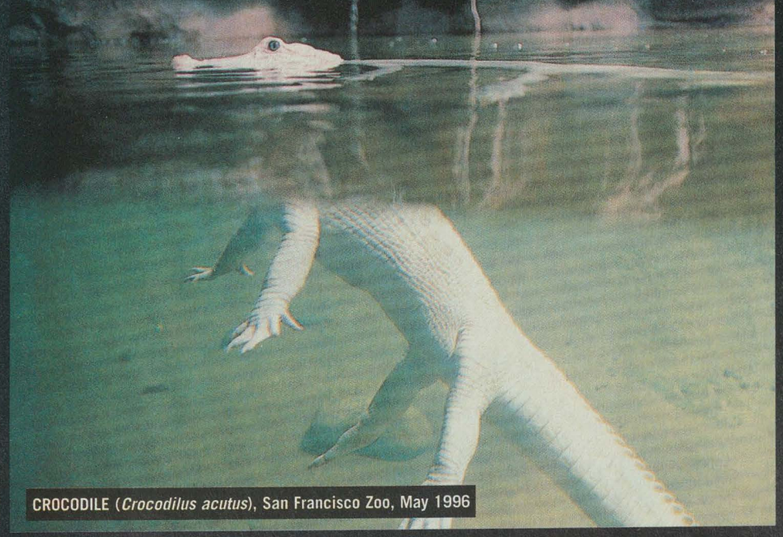


BIG FIND: Unearthing one of the giant Saxon warriors at Stretton-on-Fosse, Warwickshire

COVENTRY EVENING TELEGRAPH

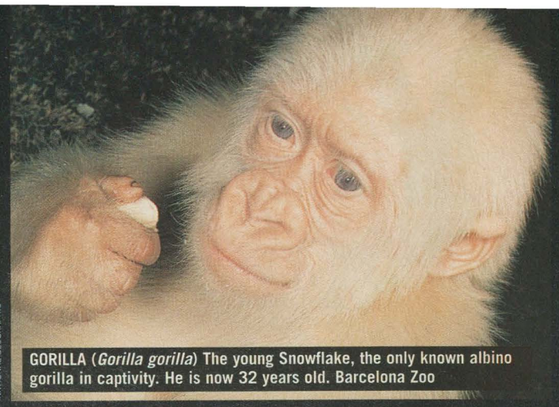
ALL WHITE NOW

OVER THE YEARS, WE HAVE NOTICED AN INCREASE IN THE OCCURRENCE OF WHITE CREATURES. THERE ARE FAR TOO MANY TO MENTION THEM ALL, BUT BOB RICKARD'S SELECTION OF SOME RECENT EXAMPLES GIVES AN IDEA OF THE DIVERSITY. THEY ALL EXEMPLIFY TYPES OF ALBINISM, A GENETIC CONDITION IN WHICH THE ENZYME NECESSARY TO PRODUCE NORMAL PIGMENTATION IS ABSENT. WHERE PARTIAL ALBINOS MIGHT RETAIN SOME LOCALISED COLOURING, FULL ALBINOS ARE CHARACTERISED BY PINKISH EYES DUE TO UNDISGUISED BLOOD VESSELS



SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

CROCODILE (*Crocodilus acutus*), San Francisco Zoo, May 1996



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

GORILLA (*Gorilla gorilla*) The young Snowflake, the only known albino gorilla in captivity. He is now 32 years old. Barcelona Zoo

BRUCE COLEMAN

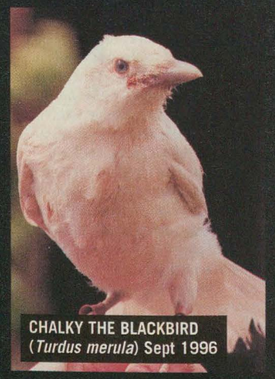
KANGAROO (*Macropus giganteus*)

BRUCE COLEMAN

HEDGEHOG (Erinaceus europaeus)

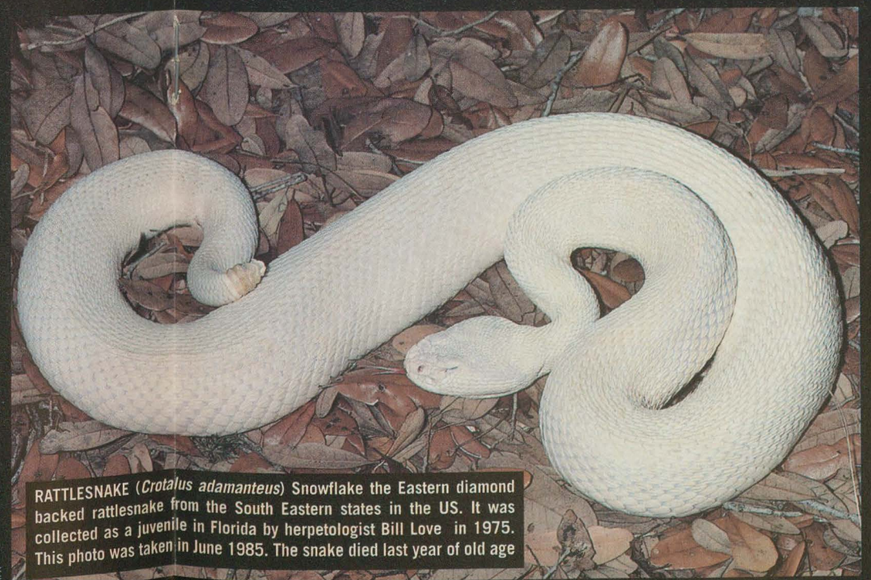
SOLO SYNDICATION

CYRIL THE SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) photographed hunting for nuts on the borders of St Leonard's Forest, Horsham, Sussex in November 1992. Locals say that he was first seen in September 1992 and comes from parents who produced another albino in 1991



NORTH NEWS AND PICTURES

CHALKY THE BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*) Sept 1996



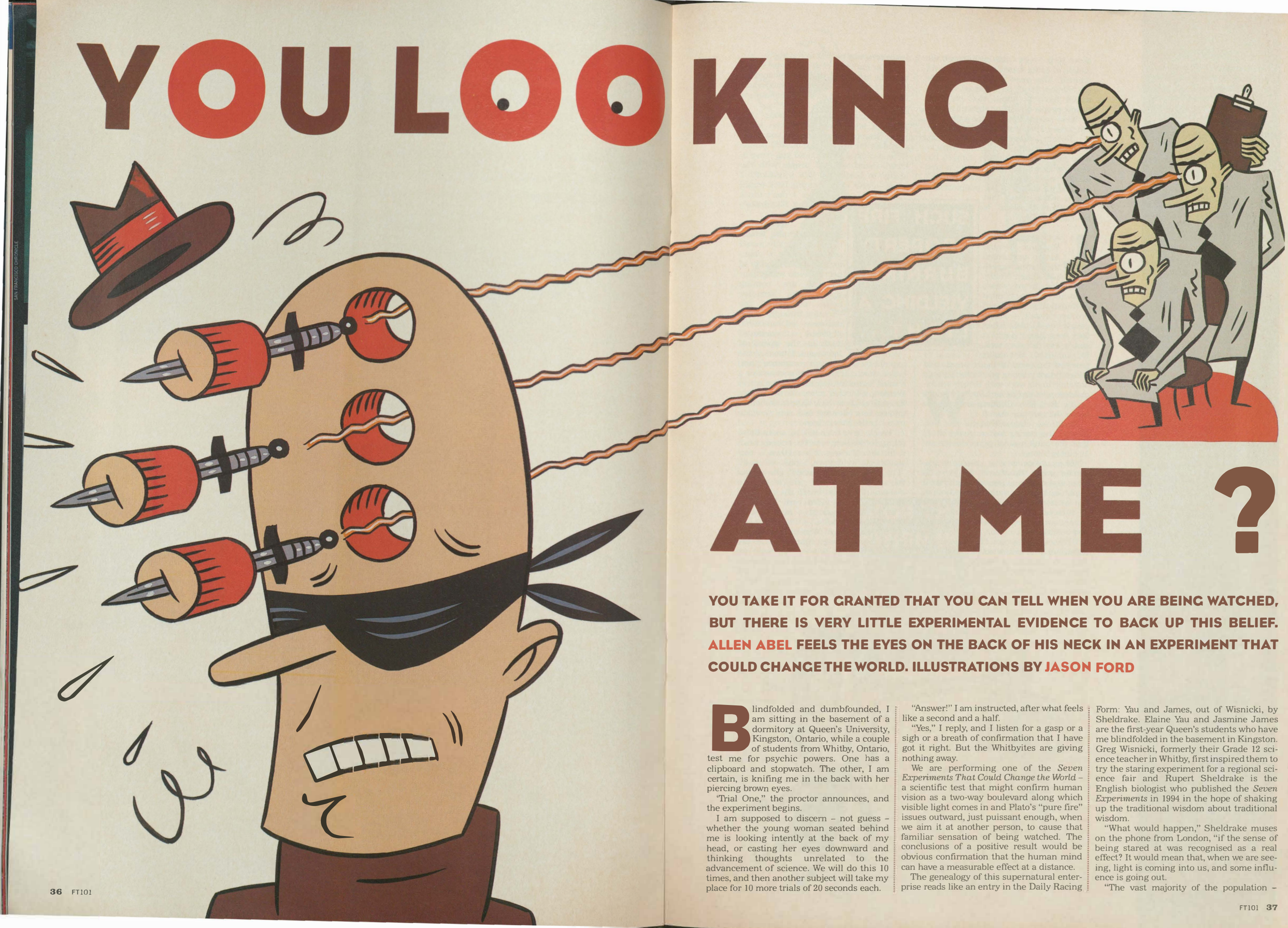
NHPA

RATTLESNAKE (*Crotalus adamanteus*) Snowflake the Eastern diamond backed rattlesnake from the South Eastern states in the US. It was collected as a juvenile in Florida by herpetologist Bill Love in 1975. This photo was taken in June 1985. The snake died last year of old age

NHPA

BADGER (*Meles meles*), Hampshire

YOU LOOKING AT ME?



YOU TAKE IT FOR GRANTED THAT YOU CAN TELL WHEN YOU ARE BEING WATCHED, BUT THERE IS VERY LITTLE EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE TO BACK UP THIS BELIEF. ALLEN ABEL FEELS THE EYES ON THE BACK OF HIS NECK IN AN EXPERIMENT THAT COULD CHANGE THE WORLD. ILLUSTRATIONS BY JASON FORD

Blindfolded and dumbfounded, I am sitting in the basement of a dormitory at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, while a couple of students from Whitby, Ontario, test me for psychic powers. One has a clipboard and stopwatch. The other, I am certain, is knifing me in the back with her piercing brown eyes.

"Trial One," the proctor announces, and the experiment begins.

I am supposed to discern – not guess – whether the young woman seated behind me is looking intently at the back of my head, or casting her eyes downward and thinking thoughts unrelated to the advancement of science. We will do this 10 times, and then another subject will take my place for 10 more trials of 20 seconds each.

"Answer!" I am instructed, after what feels like a second and a half.

"Yes," I reply, and I listen for a gasp or a sigh or a breath of confirmation that I have got it right. But the Whitbyites are giving nothing away.

We are performing one of the *Seven Experiments That Could Change the World* – a scientific test that might confirm human vision as a two-way boulevard along which visible light comes in and Plato's "pure fire" issues outward, just puissant enough, when we aim it at another person, to cause that familiar sensation of being watched. The conclusions of a positive result would be obvious confirmation that the human mind can have a measurable effect at a distance.

The genealogy of this supernatural enterprise reads like an entry in the Daily Racing Form: Yau and James, out of Wisnicki, by Sheldrake. Elaine Yau and Jasmine James are the first-year Queen's students who have me blindfolded in the basement in Kingston. Greg Wisnicki, formerly their Grade 12 science teacher in Whitby, first inspired them to try the staring experiment for a regional science fair and Rupert Sheldrake is the English biologist who published the *Seven Experiments* in 1994 in the hope of shaking up the traditional wisdom about traditional wisdom.

"What would happen," Sheldrake muses on the phone from London, "if the sense of being stared at was recognised as a real effect? It would mean that, when we are seeing, light is coming into us, and some influence is going out.

"The vast majority of the population –

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, KID...

BOB RICKARD OUTLINES DR RUPERT SHELDRAKE'S STARING EXPERIMENTS AND WHAT HE IS TRYING TO ACHIEVE. WHY NOT TRY HIS EXPERIMENT YOURSELF?

The feeling of being looked at from behind is remarkably common. So is the experience of looking at someone from behind and finding they turn around [..] In informal surveys in Europe and America, I have found that about 80 per cent of the people I asked claimed to have experienced it themselves."

So says Dr Rupert Sheldrake, who is gathering data to explore the possibility that sight might be more than the well known passive neuro-physiological sensation created by light impinging upon receptors in the eye. The deeper mystery concerns how perceived objects appear to be outside our eyes; indeed, how the everyday world about us appears to be 'out there'. It might be related to the 'magical thinking' of early childhood, he argues, a perceptual mode in which we have not yet learned to distinguish between object outside ourselves and their perceptual images 'in our heads'.

ALEX HOWE

Traditional cultures around the world, holds Sheldrake, take account of the 'power of looking' and point to the near universality of beliefs in the 'Evil Eye', the ability to curse, taint or influence something by a special glance or glare. In common usage, too, are phrases like "in the public eye", "looking daggers" at someone, an "icy stare", or feeling someone's eyes "boring" into you. It is the source of the word 'envy' (from the Latin verb invidere, 'to look askance at').

The notion of subtle emanations from the eye was discussed by early naturalists, such as Galen, Xeno, Lucretius and Pythagorus, as they tried to formulate a materialistic science. "Through our perceptions, the environment is brought within us," Sheldrake explains, "but we also extend outwards into the environment [..] If we look at distant stars, our minds stretch out over astronomical distances to touch these heavenly bodies [..] If they are both within the mind and outside the body, then the mind must extend beyond the body."

"The idea," writes Sheldrake, "is so staggeringly simple that it is hard to grasp [..] it undermines everything we have been brought up to believe about the nature of the mind, the interiority of subjective experience, and the separation of subject and object [..] It implies a two-way process."

Sheldrake first explored the background to this phenomenon in his book *Seven Experiments that could Change the World* (4th Estate, 1994): "Since then staring experiments have [..] been conducted in more than 40 schools in Britain, America and Germany. The results of these experiments have been positive in practically all cases. The statistical significance of the staring effect in all the school experiments, taken together, is overwhelming. Currently the odds against the positive results being due to chance are 10 billion to one."

Here's an experiment you can try. Select a pair of people; one to look and their victim (or subject). The subject sits blindfolded with his back to the looker at least a metre apart. The looker needs a mechanical means of signalling readiness (for example, a bleeper) to avoid subconscious clues. When ready, the looker signals and either looks or doesn't (thinking of something else). The subject, hearing the signal, has to record whether he is being looked at or not.

If you'd like to try this at home, at work or at school, Rupert Sheldrake has a free information sheet which details several experiments with a master scoring sheet you can photocopy for use as many times as you want. Write to him at: BM Experiments, London WC1N 3XX. If you report your results back to him you will be helping unravel a profound and strangely neglected mystery.

about 95 per cent – has experienced the feeling of being stared at and takes it for granted. The more uneducated people are, the less they'll be surprised. Science would have to admit that ordinary, simple people have been right all along."

"Most scientists reject the validity of the sense of being stared at," Sheldrake, a former Cambridge University biochemist, asserts, "not because they've done any research on the subject, but because it's a knee-jerk response, a kind of dogma. A positive result wouldn't validate all claims of the paranormal – but it would mean that a blanket dismissal is not valid."

SUCH FIRE HAS THE PROPERTY NOT OF BURNING, BUT OF YIELDING A GENTLE LIGHT...

Last year, Elaine Yau and Jasmine James performed the staring experiment on 38 of their Whitby classmates. To everyone's amazement, they obtained a statistically significant positive result – many people could tell when they were being stared at and a few did very well. In London, Sheldrake received the news of their success and added it to a growing pile of similar data obtained in his work with British schoolchildren who had never heard of Medusa or the Evil Eye. Children seem to do better than anyone else.

Sheldrake claims that he has performed the staring test so many times that the odds against pure chance are 10 billion to one.

"The current state of science is like Russia under Brezhnev," he says. "It takes a very daring person to criticise it in public. Most Russians didn't believe in the system but paid lip-service to it just to survive. But when the Berlin Wall came down, it became clear that nobody had believed in it all along."

"If it's wrong, good – I'll sleep easier," says Greg Wisnicki, a teacher at Sinclair Secondary School in Whitby. "But if it's true, we've got something that should be investigated in a major way. I'm not saying that it should be as big as the space programme, but this is big."

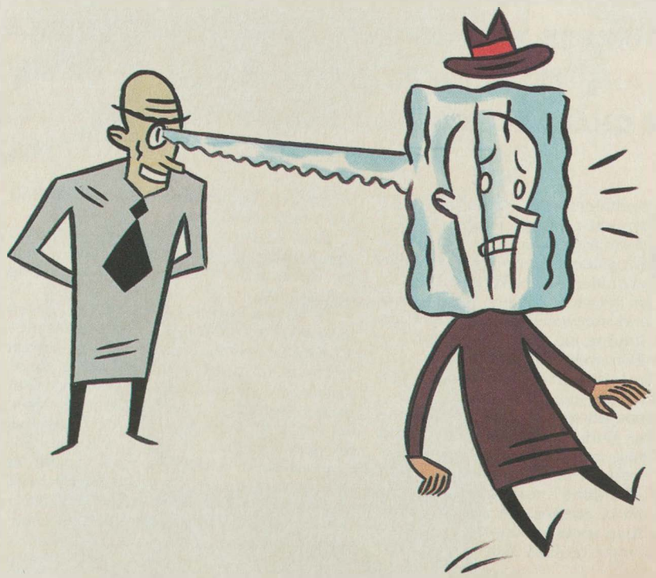
"Come on, Greg," I needle him. "Aliens blowing up the White House would be *big*. The Second Coming of Jesus would be *big*. This is just knowing if someone is staring at you."

"But think of the implications," the educator responds. "If you can sense when one person is staring at you, what would be the effect if a thousand people were staring at you? Could you concentrate? Could we find people with the ability to block out this sensation? I agree – Jesus Christ coming back would be bigger. I don't think we're doing Sheldrake's ideas justice."

(Among the other ideas Sheldrake would like to see rigidly tested are: the reality of phantom limbs; the ability of pets to sense when their masters are coming home; how termites build archways; the variation throughout the universe of so-called physical "constants" such as the speed of light; and, famously, the hypothesis of 'morphic resonance' that, boiled down, infers that if a mouse or a human learns his way through a maze in London, all other mice or men from Knightsbridge to New Guinea somehow imbibe this learning and can navigate mazes better themselves.)

"People have been talking about these things for too long now, but nobody's run it through the scientific method, a real statistical breakdown," says Wisnicki. "I'm tired of hearing about ghosts and the paranormal. I'd *prefer* a nice mechanistic universe. If it's not true, great! Let's put it to rest. But if it *is* true, we've opened a new door in scientific research."

Last year, one of Wisnicki's students, Chris Newald, won first prize at the Durham Region science fair with an apparent verification of Sheldrake's "morphogenetic fields". Newald had 100 students work through a paper maze. Then, an hour later, he found that 100 other students completed the same puzzle, on average, a little faster. Now at the University of Guelph, Newald says his result "isn't the greatest, but it's something you'd keep researching".



"We're working with high school students here," Wisnicki cautions. "There's a lot of room for error. If I wanted to do it justice, I'd do it on my own time. But I've got four kids and my wife works and I have to go home and cook dinner..."

"Maidens are said to have power in their eyes to attract to themselves the love of men," wrote Leonardo da Vinci. Pliny the Elder thought that wolves, hyenas and goats could do the same.

In 1898, the Cornell psychologist EB Titchener noted that many of his students "believe that, by persistent gazing at the back of the neck, they have the power of making a person seated in front of them turn round and look them in the face".

...FOR THE PURE FIRE WITHIN US IS AKIN TO THIS, AND THEY CAUSED IT TO FLOW THROUGH THE EYES
-PLATO

Titchener dismissed this notion of eye-power as hogwash.

Everyone fidgets, he concluded, and sometimes a fidgeter turns around to discover someone looking his way. And sometimes not. So much for changing the world.

In 1996, psychologists Dr Gerald Winer and Jane Cottrell of Ohio State University asked students from first grade through university this question: "When we look at something, does anything such as rays, waves or energy go out of our eyes?"

Fifty-nine per cent of first graders, 70 per cent of third, 51 per cent of fifth graders and 33 per cent of college students answered yes. "We were not trying to prove or disprove whether you can feel someone else's stares," says Winer from Columbus. "We were studying the belief. We wanted to see whether their belief system changed when they were confronted with the truth."

The truth, in the Ohioans' view, is that extramission – Leonardo's love-ray – is Grade A bunk. But when they performed their own staring experiments, the results "surprised – indeed shocked – us... the belief in the ability to feel stares, which occurs at a high level among children as well as adults, seems, if anything, to increase with age, as if irrationality were increasing rather than declining between childhood and adulthood!"

We're in a Kingston restaurant and Elaine Yau is going at the staring results with a calculator.

"If this turns out to be true," I ask, "would it change the world?"

"People who are going to believe in psychic ability will believe it anyway," offers a Queen's student named Keira Grant, a political-science major and operatic soprano from Toronto's Havergal School. She describes herself as a "neo-pagan".

"But this wouldn't prove it was psychic, whatever that means," says Jasmine James. "It would just prove that there is a sixth sense and it's the sense of being stared at."

"If it's a psychic ability," offers Elaine Yau, "it probably wouldn't change the world because then only psychic people could do it. But what if it's just the opening of the power of what anyone's mind can do? If you could control what your mind is doing to other people, *that* would change the world. Sheldrake says we should practice if we don't do well at sensing stares – but what if *everybody* practiced?"

"Never mind that," I interject. "How did I do?"

"Four out of ten," Yau shrugs. "Not very well. The whole experiment came out just about equal to chance. But Keira got nine out of ten."

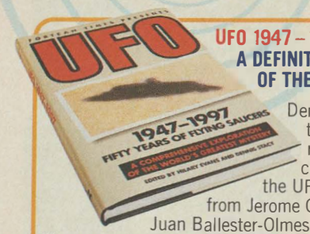
"I could feel that tingly sensation," the neo-pagan reports proudly. She tells me that she has recently taken up the religion of Wicca, the sisterhood of witches.

"*Witches*?" I inhale. "That explains it."

"I do cast the occasional spell," the young woman says. "But remember, I'm only 17. I have plenty of time to work on the craft."

fortware

NEW



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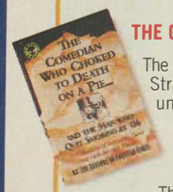

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YOU'VE MISSED IT, OR MAYBE YOU DIDN'T, BUT UFOLOGISTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD WERE THERE. WHERE? ROSWELL 97, OF COURSE, A SIX-DAY PARTY TO CELEBRATE 'THE CRASH'. BEFORE PACKING HER BAGS, REBECCA KEITH SENT US THIS DESPATCH

REBECCA KEITH
MAKES HER 'VIRTUAL' HOME ON THE INTERNET WHERE SHE INTERACTS WITH THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS IN UFOLOGY. IN REALITY SHE HAILS FROM HOUSTON, TEXAS

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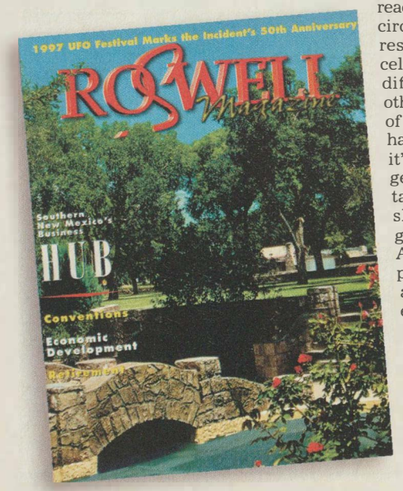
This July, the population of Roswell, New Mexico, is expected to swell by at least 85,000. No, it's not because the mothership is landing, but because the small city will play host to celebrations of the 50th anniversary of 'The Crash'. It doesn't matter whether anyone agrees exactly where the crash occurred or even if there was a July 1947 UFO crash – the city will celebrate in a big way. The festivities get started on 1 July and don't finish until 6 July. Preparations have been under way for a year and hotels have been booked up since last October. But don't let the threat of not finding a room stop you – accommodation is available in nearby towns, along with a shuttle service.

The festival schedule reads like that of a circus, but in one respect, the Roswell celebration will be no different from any other UFO event: lots of conference speakers have been invited, and it's rumoured they'll get big bucks for their talks. The speakers slate runs the full gamut from Native Americans relaying prophecy through to abductees relating experiences.

Conspicuously absent from the speakers panel are many of the veteran Roswell incident researchers. You won't see Kevin Randle, Bill Moore, Karl Pflock, Don Berliner, Kent Jeffrey or even Philip Klass. Neither will you hear from Walter Haut, Glenn Dennis, Jesse Marcel, Jr or even teary-eyed Frankie Rowe – unless you run into them in town. (Many will be getting the hell out of Dodge for the week.)

It's a shame that we'll be fed only one, possibly two, versions of the crash when there are so many juicy versions of the story. And nary a word will be heard from the other side – that no UFO crashed in 1947. Not unless, of course, you head on down to the far end of Main Street to John Price's Outa Limits UFO Enigma Museum.



ROSWELL: The town where some of the most interesting visitors are from out of state

At the museum, you will hear a debate between Kevin 'It's a UFO' Randle and Karl 'It's Mogul' Pflock. Price's museum, leased from a local businessman, was recently told to close. Apparently, Price was evicted and told to be out by 30 June. When I learned of the eviction I was stunned – so stunned that I made the 750 mile (1,200km) trek to Roswell to meet Price and to see his museum before it closed. Politics seemed to be at work, but Price has since been given a reprieve and will be allowed to stay until the end of July.

With the masses headed to Mecca – I mean Roswell – one would think there would be enough room and goodwill for everyone to participate in the gala. Price's museum and the International Roswell UFO Museum and Research Center are both on Main Street (along with just about everything else), but at opposite ends. They couldn't be farther apart if they were at opposite ends of the solar system. Maybe all that will change when Clifford Stone takes over Price's Enigma Museum in August at a new undetermined location. Stone told me that he intends to try to get along with everyone. Hey, I don't think that Price hasn't tried to get along, its just that passions run deep when it comes to the Roswell story. And remember this is ufology – where the next buck is right around the corner and anyone can be, and at some point usually is, called an agent of disinformation.

On the official event schedule you will see Erich von Daniken (*Chariots of the Gods*), along with Command Sgt Major Robert O Dean [ret.], psychiatrist John Mack MD, Whitley Strieber, Budd Hopkins, and Michael Lindemann who all round out the non-Roswell-related speakers. Another interesting choice of speakers is the former John Salter, an abductee and professor emeritus of American Indian Studies at the University of North Dakota, who has changed his name to John Hunter Gray to reflect his Native American tribal heritage (Micmac/Abenake/Mohawk).

For those of us interested in the Roswell story, we can count on conference perennial Stanton Friedman to tell us his version, while Kevin Randle's former sidekick Don Schmitt will no doubt have a slightly different story to tell. Animal mutilation researcher Linda Moulton Howe will relate stories of crash retrievals and her research of a small piece of still-unidentified object that allegedly crashed somewhere near Roswell in 1947. This material was given to Howe by talk-show host Art Bell, who received the material anonymously last year. Paul Davids, executive producer and co-writer of the Showtime movie *Roswell*, will be on hand to relate his research into the Roswell cover-up.

If 'culture' is more your thing, then the Roswell Community Little Theater's original production of *Ezekiel's Wheels* has planned seven performances of this original play about the Biblical 'UFO' story. Don't care for live theatre? Then you will have the opportunity to view Paul David's movie *Roswell*. Sure you've seen it on the tube, but more than likely you have not seen it on the big screen. If you want to take home some souvenirs, stop by the International UFO Museum and Research Center for UFO books, videos, and even glow-in-the-dark alien suckers!

And speaking of suckers, I'll be the first to admit I'm a sucker for a good circus. The tacky side of Roswell '97 – partytime – will be much more than speakers, fine arts, and museums...

There'll be a soapbox derby-styled UFO Crash and Burn Extravaganza on Main Street's downward slope, where various non-motorised terrestrial-made spacecraft will compete for $3,000 in prizes. Or how about a Flying Saucer Pancake Eating contest? The Alien Chase 5K/10K Walk and Run will help take off the pounds caused by all those pancakes. There are a whole host of other sideshows, including trips to the Hub Corn Crash Site.

Details of the planned dusk-to-dawn rock concert, to be televised worldwide, are somewhat sketchy, but rumours place Sheryl Crow, the Foo Fighters and Bush as some of the performers.

Yes, some of my story might sound like Chamber of Commerce material, but you've got to be nice to get one of those press passes. No matter, I've had my hotel reservations for months and this is one circus that I wouldn't miss – even if flying saucers land on the White House lawn. Further details can be found at: **www.roswell.net**

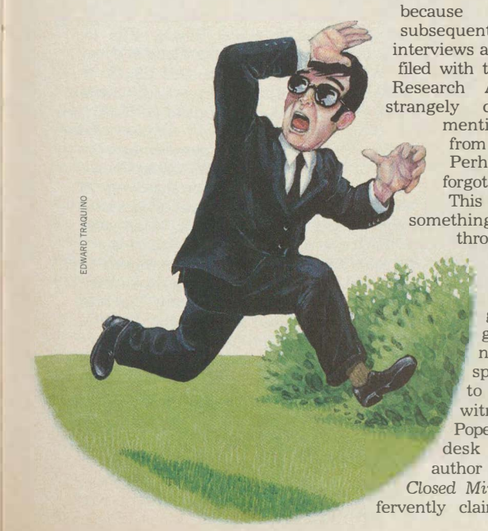
ALIENS STOLE MY BADGER'S RECTUM

IF YOU'RE OUT IN THE YORKSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE, WATCH OUT FOR FALLING WOODLAND ANIMALS, WARNS ANDY ROBERTS. ACCORDING TO SOME UFOLOGISTS, ALIENS ARE DISSECTING THEM AND DUMPING THEM ON UNSUSPECTING PASSERS-BY

ANDY ROBERTS
IS CO-EDITOR OF *UFO TIMES* AND AUTHOR OF SEVERAL UFO AND FOLKORE BOOKS

Men In Black, those suited and dissonant spectres of ufolore who put the frighteners on witnesses, are very much in the news again. The comedy sci-fi film *Men In Black* is released on 1 August and Jenny Randles' book, entitled simply *MIB*, came out on 14 June and is a thorough overview of the legend, updating it and unveiling much new information. Once considered to be from the outer reaches of the belief system, MIB are slowly but surely being rehabilitated into mainstream ufology.

This is not entirely without some justification it seems. Besides Randles' revelations, a new piece of evidence has recently been unearthed at the Public Records Office by researcher Nick Redfern. The case in question concerns PC Colin Perks of Wilmslow in Cheshire, whose 7 January 1966 sighting of a classic domed saucer-type UFO was duly reported to the MOD through police channels. The MOD deemed the sighting to be of sufficient calibre to be passed on from the usual UFO desk, S4E, to a 'specialist unit' known as DI61. Less than a month after Perks' sighting, on 1 February a gentleman of that persuasion was despatched to quiz Perks about his experience. Was he asked, as per the myth, to keep schtum about their visit? Very possibly, because in numerous subsequent newspaper interviews and in his report filed with the British UFO Research Association he strangely chose not to mention 'the Men from the Ministry'. Perhaps he simply forgot about them.



EDWARD TRAQUINO

This information is something of a breakthrough as until now it was accepted wisdom among serious ufologists that the government did not make any special attempts to question UFO witnesses. Nick Pope, ex MOD UFO desk jockey and author of *Open Skies, Closed Minds*, has always fervently claimed that there were no departments, beyond his, who took an interest in UFO phenomena, and that any witnesses who did claim to have been visited by officialdom had merely been hoaxed by 'Walter Mitty'-type civilian characters out for a jape. Oh dear, Nick has obviously not been telling all because when Jenny Randles proved to him that DSTI *did* exist he went quite pale and refused to discuss the matter further!

A more detailed examination of this case and the other fruits of Nick Redfern's meticulous research will appear in his book, *A Covert Agenda*, to be published by Simon & Schuster later this summer.

TIME TO TEACH ABCs IN A NEW WAY

According to some ufologists, we might be close to a solution to the Alien Big Cat mystery. For years now the Scarborough area of the east coast of Yorkshire has been plagued by sightings of these creatures and in just one instance during February 1997, nine dead sheep were found on Pauline Sandiman's farm at Snainton, all with their stomachs ripped open. Close encounters of the furred kind? Not according to the ufologists. Genuine terrestrial alien big cats not being strange enough for them, certain UFO investigators have drawn their own mazy conclusions. David Kenneally of Global Investigation Systems believes the slayings to be the work of a 'Morph', an alien able to shapeshift at will. According to Kenneally, this naturally explains why there is no evidence left at the scene. Are we seeing here, in embryonic form, a new twist to ufology in Great Britain? One in which the still unsolved ABC sightings and the killings attributed to them subtly become 'cattle mutilations' caused by aliens and therefore part of the UFO mythos? We're watching.

But something weird *does* seem to be going on in this area; a view amplified at a lecture given by ex-police sergeant and veteran ufologist Tony Dodd in March. Dodd spun an everyday story of a region gripped by fear and panic, with mutilated creatures being discovered on an almost daily basis. Cows, sheep, horses, deer and other animals had all been found dead he claimed, all victims of the same sinister modus operandi. Whoever – or whatever – is leaving its prey with a single hole in their head and without their rectums.

Unfortunately Tony's slides weren't available and the best evidence he could offer, besides the alarming narratives, was of the "and then my mate said come and look at this" variety. A disbelieving colleague in the audience whispered "it'll be voles next" and in an eerily telepathic instant, Tony cited a case where a mouse had been found with ventilated cranium and missing rectum. The sceptics among you might rightly question why anyone, alien or human, would want to do this to defenceless woodland creatures and what use the missing parts could be put to in any case. But who are we to question alien behaviour? After all if it is *truly* alien, both motive and method should be totally incomprehensible to us. Then again, perhaps crunchy deer ring piece is something of a delicacy on Zeta Reticuli. Levity was not on Tony's agenda however as he hinted at dark motives and darker agencies against which we mere mortals appear to be powerless.

Just when the audience couldn't get any more agog, Tony cranked the credulometer right up to number eleven. He had been told by several witnesses that some of the animals had actually been seen falling from the sky in their mutilated state. One man had narrowly escaped being hit by a descending badger, another had been obliged to drag sundry livestock out of the road to get his car past. This animal roadblock had been dropped not a minute previously from 'something' with immensely bright lights which had swished overhead. Tony's conclusion? Aliens, flying in giant football-pitch sized craft, who collect the animals Noah's Ark-style, perform their grisly business while aboard and callously discard them haphazardly on the highways and byways of north Yorkshire.

Just why this Earth-shattering information was not on the front page of *The Times* or the lead story on *Newsnight* wasn't quite clear. But whether due to cover-up or couldn't-care-less on behalf of the authorities, Dodd claims that these barbarous acts *are* taking place on a regular basis in this area. So if you're thinking of somewhere to take a break and spend some time sky watching, or want to try your arm at investigating an active mystery which, if any part of it is true, has enormous implications, then the Scarborough area is the place to go.

GORILLAS IN THE MIDST

ON HEARING THAT AN OUT-OF-PLACE GORILLA MIGHT HAVE 'ESCAPED FROM A TRAVELLING CIRCUS' MANY SCEPTICS ARE TEMPTED TO DISMISS THE REPORT, BUT LOREN COLEMAN SHOWS THAT OFTEN SUCH A DENOUNCEMENT IS BUILT ON SHAKY FOUNDATIONS

My thoughts have been turning, lately, to recent findings that reinforce the view that *Homo erectus* was living at the same time as *Homo sapiens* in Indonesia, that Neanderthals roamed further north and survived further into modern times than originally thought and, in general, that many species of australopithecines, paranthropines and other subhominids were all living happily together in Africa.

The theory that humankind originated in a 'single species' really is dead. Finally, people are beginning to see the similarities between this and what's happening today with Bigfoot, yeti and the Vietnamese wildmen. We have had cousins around us for a long time.

Some of the best evidence for these hairy relatives is provided by an examination of the pre-1958 Bigfoot reports. As it turns out, one of these – an account from 1869, from Kansas – has stimulated much discussion already this year and can be found on Matt Dennis' Kansas Bigfoot website – **www.fn.net/~mdennis/sighti~1.htm** Apparently, during Summer of 1869, in the Arcadia Valley of Crawford County, Kansas, people starting seeing a "wild man or a gorilla, or 'what is it'." Called 'Old Sheff' by the locals, it was seen by more than 60 people. "It cannot be caught and nobody is willing to shoot it," reported the Osage City *Journal Free Press* of 6 August 1869.

DARK SECRET: Gorillas were once regarded in much the way that Bigfoots are viewed today

The issue of the day was whether it was of the "human family or not". The writer of the piece noted that "probably it will be found to be a gorilla or large orang-utan that has escaped from some menagerie in the settlements east of here." The item was signed 'MS Trimble' and it had been reprinted in the *St Louis Democrat*.

It seems that the main reason for labelling this report a possible hoax is the mention of the gorilla. Here's 'Gunthar' from the internet:

"I strongly suspect this report to be a hoax [..] It certainly doesn't read like a newspaper report for even the most hick publication. The real proof, however, is the mention of the possibility of a gorilla having been lost by a passing circus. There were no gorillas in captivity in the US or anywhere in the world until the 1880s. In fact, until Henry Stanley, (the African explorer) brought back a number of furs and skulls to England, there was no physical evidence that gorillas were more than just travellers' tales. Gorillas were thought to be as mythical as Bigfoot are commonly regarded today. PT Barnum was the first to display a live gorilla in his American Museum in New York. It certainly would be many years after that time that a carnival would have been able to obtain a gorilla."

Such critiques are often enough to bury a good account, but let's look logically at this for a minute. The first historical mention of the gorilla was in 500 BC. In 1844, in the Boston *Journal of Natural History*, American Dr Thomas Savage gave the first scientific description of the gorilla. Nevertheless, it was when a skull was obtained by another American, Dr Leighton Wilson, in 1846 and the animal described in 1847 by Wilson and Savage, both West African missionaries, that the popularity of the 'gorilla' really started skyrocketing. Sir Richard Owen (because of the work of Savage and Wilson) was the first to 'formally' describe the gorilla. Captain Harris, in 1851, brought the first skeleton to England. That same year, a skeleton was sent to Philadelphia. Also in 1851, a French naturalist (Saint-Hillaire) gave the animal it's own genus.

This was quickly followed by what we would say was a good deal of media attention about gorillas, whipped up by Du Chaillu's sensationalist travels in Africa and a number of books that came out in 1861. Indeed, Reynolds (1967) writes (p137): "After (Du Chaillu's) trip, which lasted from 1856 to 1859, Du Chaillu returned to the United States, where he received widespread acclaim." In 1863, another famous gorilla/travel book was published, written by American explorer Winwood Reade, after he spent five months in gorilla country. There is every possibility that the witnesses to 'Old Sheff' in Arcadia Valley in 1869 might have been influenced by these well publicised descriptions of gorillas.

We also know that chimps and monkeys in American travelling circus shows sometimes were labelled as 'gorillas'. The news climate of the late 1860s allowed such comparisons. Despite the European framework of the discovery of gorillas, the media storm was really being generated out of America. The "lost from a circus" explanation, groundless as usual, was accepted easily, without any gorillas actually present in America.

The first four gorillas in captivity were brought to Liverpool, in 1855; Liverpool, in 1873; Berlin, in 1883; and Liverpool, again, in 1897. The first one in Liverpool was thought to be a chimpanzee. The first two in the US arrived at Boston, in 1897, and at New York in 1911, the Ringling Brothers Circus exhibited 'John Daniel' in the 1920s. The combined Ringling Brothers/Barnum circus owned and exhibited 'Gargantua' from 1937 until he died in 1949.

The lesson is that we must be careful about explanations – such as Gunthar's – which turn out to be grounded in fiction, not facts. But then, maybe, the story was a newspaper hoax, after all?

Sources

David P Willoughy. *All About Gorillas*. ASBarnes & Co, New York, 1978.

Vernon Reynold. *The Apes*. EP Dutton, New York, 1967.

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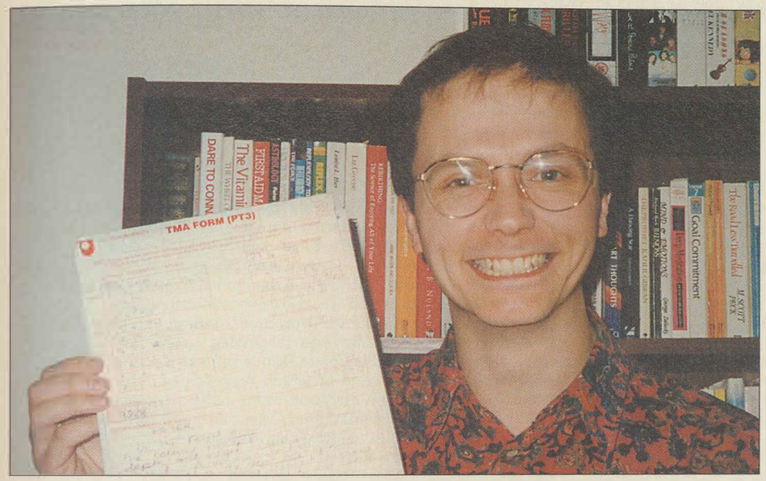

Says Peter Barka: "I got 95% for an essay on Freud and 88% for one on Piaget – and it's all down to the PhotoReading home study course. All I did was PhotoRead the relevant chapters at the rate of one page a second – about 25,000 words per minute."

"I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT," said Peter Barka, who lives in Surbiton. "I opened up the envelope containing my marks for two Open University essays I wrote, and got a real shock. My tutor had awarded me 95% for an essay on Freud and 88% for one on Piaget – and it's all down to the PhotoReading home study course.

"What amazed me was that I was only expecting 65-70%, which I usually get for my essays. I hadn't done any background reading – I didn't get round to it in time – or the expected 15 hours a week study time!

"Yet my tutor wrote in his report: 'In the Freud essay you analysed the relevant concepts with unusual depth and insight. Clearly a pass I (95%). A similar standard is maintained in the short notes questions. You have evidently gained a great deal of knowledge which will be of use throughout the course.'

"I was shocked at the result"

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"When I sat down and wrote the essay I felt I knew something about the subject. But after I wrote the essay I thought 'Oh my god, I'll probably do worse than last time when I got 73%', especially as I'm very left brain, and the subject matter was more right brained. How wrong I was!"

Peter was overjoyed on the day he got, for him, the unusually high marks: "I felt delirious, and I danced around like an idiot. I was just shocked at the result. I still feel quite shaky when I talk to my friends about the possibilities of PhotoReading."

"I'm absolutely bowled over!"

Hilke Legenhausen, 27, and based in East Grinstead, earns her living as a translator. She spent a couple of weeks learning to PhotoRead, and then PhotoRead her German-English dictionary twice.

"The dictionary has 1,600 pages, so I Photo-Read the whole of it in about half an hour. I got my personal proof that the system works when I translated a German magazine into English: I only had to look up four expressions when 40 or 50 would be normal for me. I'm absolutely bowled over!

"I'm about to start PhotoReading all my textbooks for the next year, and guess what: anatomy and physiology don't scare me anymore!"

Ms Hilke Legenhausen: PhotoRead a German-English dictionary and "got personal proof that the system works"

"I almost felt a cheat"

Vee Freir, who lives in the Highlands of Scotland, recently completed an Open University BSc Honours degree.

In the last OU year she had to read 22 course units, plus set books and other reference material, and submit seven written assessments (TMAs) which included project work.

She enthuses: "As a result of using the PhotoReading techniques I got so far ahead that I completed the reading and the written assessments a couple of months early. The tutor was a bit taken aback as he'd never experienced this before and, what's more, my assessments averaged 87%.

"For one essay I went in the library and PhotoRead 16 books with the purpose of getting one relevant quote from each. Within half an hour of PhotoReading I had done just that, and I was amazed how quickly it happened.

"I almost felt a cheat, yet I went through every page of each book, and must have subconsciously absorbed the relevant parts to have accessed the information that quickly."

"A strange experience" says McKenna

TV hypnotist Paul McKenna learned to PhotoRead for a Channel 4 documentary. He commented: "When PhotoReading does work it's a strange experience. I ended up feeling a bit light-headed. I couldn't actually remember anything about the book – until the questions started. I just seemed to know some of the answers. I scored 73% which was statistically well in excess of anything I could have got just by guessing."

"PhotoReading is literally eye-opening"

Sheila Ostrander, co-author of the best-selling book SuperLearning 2000, is very enthusiastic about PhotoReading: "It's literally eye-opening. In a sense PhotoReading is a specialised case of SuperLearning. The same core techniques are evoked – being in the right state of body and mind, feeding data to and accessing it from the unconscious, dissolving learning blocks – but applied to reading instead of, say, language learning.

"PhotoRead 100s of pages in minutes"

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Ostrander carries on: "Speed reading has been around and working for over half a century, yet it's still rarely used in business or education. PhotoReading is a much more organic system, which flows with the nature of our expanding view of ourselves. It may well be standard equipment for 21st century Superlearners."

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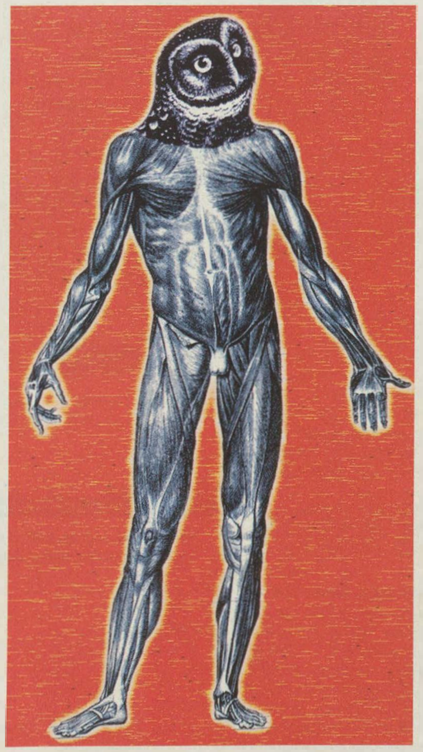
THAT OWL DEVIL MOON

HOW DO YOU GET FROM *MOBY DICK* TO *THE MOTHMAN PROPHECIES*? WELL, IF YOU ARE DOC SHIELS IT'S A RELATIVELY EASY SKIP OF THE MIND THAT TAKES IN SOME CURIOUS CORNOLOGY AND EVEN THE SURREALIST PAINTER MAX ERNST

DOC SHIELS
IS A PLAYWRIGHT, MUSICIAN, AUTHOR AND ARTIST

Recently, I was thinking about Owlman and Mothman. Jon Downes had been questioning me – in Cornwall – about the weird winged thing of Mawnan Woods, for a book he was writing on the subject. I tried to convince Jon that, back in 1976, I had 'invented' the Owlman, but Mr Downes obviously (and quite correctly) did not believe me. I returned home, eventually, to Ireland, and thought about Owlman – and Mothman.

Mothman arrived in my head by the usual rather devious route. I had been reading *Moby Dick* (for the umpteenth time), which led the mind to 'Moby Mick', a white peiste seen in Keel Lough, Achill Island, years ago. Keel reminded me of John Keel and Mothman. I tried to find my copy of *The Mothman Prophecies*, but failed. It is probably still packed away somewhere, waiting for a shelf to be erected. Anyway, two names from the book came to mind: Chief Corn Stalk and Princess Moon Owl. Splendidly evocative appellations. They evoked Max Ernst, the surrealist shaman who brought Owlman to life, in Cornwall, in 1937. Maybe Max had Mothman connections, too. He certainly had lepidopteran leanings and knew how to take impressions on paper from the wings of a moth.



Chief Corn Stalk was a Shawnee (sounds Irish) who was obviously close to the corn (maize) spirit. Princess Moon Owl claimed to be a native of Ceres, the largest asteroid, named after the Roman goddess of corn. Some Native American tribes associate the moon with corn. The owl is a symbol of night, wisdom and divination. Owls hunt field and harvest mice in moonlit fields. Crop circles happen, too, nocturnally. Max Ernst's 'other' self was the bird-headed Loplop.

In 1942, Ernst met the painter Dorothea Tanning and moved with her to Sedona, Arizona. Max was fascinated by Native American culture. He had a large collection of Hopi and Zuni Kachina dolls and carved wooden masks, some of which represented corn gods and spirits. He was also moon-mad and made large totemic sculptures which embody his obsessions. Chief Corn Stalk and Princess Moon Owl of Ceres seem to point to Max Ernst. Fortean lexilinkers will have noted the 'Corn' in Cornwall, too.

Cornish people talk of being 'maized', meaning amazed or astonished, by something incredible such as Owlman. We pick up our lexilinks anywhere. One measures a corn circle starting anywhere. Corn is a horny word, too. Bread or booze from the horn of plenty. Corny stuff, but significant, perhaps.

There is a thing known as the corn earworm, which is the larva of a noctuid moth. It feeds on corn. Then there is the corn borer, the larva of a pyramid moth. It feeds on corn. Night moth and fire moth. I'm reminded of the Phoenix, and Arizona. I'm reminded, too, of New Mexico and Mike McCormick. Mike was very interested in Native American culture of the Southwest United States. He arrived in Cornwall, in 1976, shortly before Owlman appeared. Mike made use of owl bones in his grotesque creations. Maybe it means something. There is a Phoenix in Mawnan Old Church. I don't have to mention Dublin.

In 1966, American psychic Dr David Hoy predicted the Silver Bridge disaster. John Keel connected Mothman with the collapse of the Silver Bridge on the Ohio River, in 1967. Dave Hoy was a friend of mine. He took part in a number of monster-raising experiments in the Seventies.

On 24 May (my birthday) 1976, a radio broadcast on Boston's WBUR-FM featured Jerome Clark, Loren Coleman, and Vic Wheatman (good name) discussing Mothman and other bizarre winged entities. At some point in the programme, Jerry Clark was talking about John Keel linking UFO and Mothman sightings, when there was a sudden loud squeak. Exactly the squeak which Mothman is said to have made. Like a big mouse when it's caught by a very big owl, in a cornfield. There was a lot of UFO activity in Cornish skies during 1976. Probably some squeaking in Cornish cornfields, too.

Remember the jolly Green Giant with his cans of corn, and think of the Greenwood sisters, who saw Owlman in 1976. They were from Southport, Merseyside, not far from Ormskirk (Church of the Worm?). Southport, USA, is near Cape Fear. Consider Cape Horn and think of the greenhorn whaler. Was Ishmael's mattress, at the Spouter Inn, stuffed with corn-cobs?

In 1976, Mrs Payne found the corpse of a whale at Durgan, not far from Mawnan Old Church. Does this connect Moby Dick with the Owlman? So far as I'm concerned, it most certainly does. Max Ernst and Herman Melville would surely agree. Cornwall's Owlman has outlived West Virginia's Mothman. It appeared again, quite recently, to frighten a marine biologist; and I know it has been seen by a cetologist. Owlman has always been associated with Morgawr, the sea monster. These things indicate more than a pinch of old saltiness in that corn-owl critter.

Sandy Gordon, a seafaring friend of mine, had a boat called 'The Owl', which he sometimes moored in the Helford. On one of the saloon bulkheads was a painting, by me, of Moby Dick. These things should be mentioned. It makes you think, and that can't be bad.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

BOB RICKARD REMEMBERS THE LIVES AND PASSING OF ONE OF THE FIRST AND MOST COLOURFUL CROP CIRCLERS, DAVE CHORLEY; CLYDE TOMBAUGH, THE MAN WHO DISCOVERED THE PLANET PLUTO; AND OTHERS FROM THE FORTEAN WORLD

FORTEAN PICTURE LIBRARY

DAVE CHORLEY: Crop circle pioneer

DAVE CHORLEY

D. END OF NOV 1996.

Dave Chorley was the inspirational half of the infamous crop circle making team of 'Doug and Dave' whose activities we first reported in ***FT60:9*** (Dec 1991) and which, in the early days of the phenomenon were attributed by some investigators to a paranormal origin. However, their 'signature' quickly became well known and it is certain they made many circles throughout the 1980s – but certainly not all that they claimed or were credited to them. Old-age pensioners Chorley and Doug Bower would plan out their designs on a modular basis and invented a 'sighting cap' and 'treading board' to implement them. Chorley died of lung cancer.

MARTIN CAIDIN

B. 1927 – D. 24 MARCH 1997; 69.

Prolific author of fiction featuring aviation mysteries, including a novel based on the legend of the Bermuda Triangle, *Three Corners to Nowhere* (Bantam, 1975). Caidin was best known for stream of novels about a 'bionic man', that began with *Cyborg* in 1972 and culminated in the *Six Million Dollar Man* series on TV. *Ansible 117 (April 1997).*

MIMI HYNEK

B. 9 NOV 1923 – D. 10 OCT 1996; 73.

Wife of influential astronomer-ufologist J Allen Hynek, who helped him found the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) in Chicago and who, after his death in 1986, provided their old home for use as a base for CUFOS and its extensive library and files.

GORDON STEIN

B. NEW YORK, NY, 30 APRIL 1941 – D. BUFFALO, NY, 27 AUG 1996; 55.

Librarian and archivist closely associated with the 'free-thought' movements in Britain and America, Gordon Stein, PhD, edited the *American Rationalist* for 20 years and founded the journal *Free Inquiry* which he edited for 15 years. He also wrote and lectured prolifically. He built up a huge collection of books on the topics of free-thought and the paranormal. His critical attitude to the latter brought him to the attention of the CSICOP with whom he found a spiritual home. His last activities concerned the establishment of the library at CSICOP's new Center for Inquiry in Amherst, NY, which aims to become the largest collection of free-thought and skeptical literature in the world. His works include: *God: Pro and Con* (1990), *Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism* (2 vols., 1980 & 1987), *Encyclopedia of Hoaxes* (1993), *Encyclopedia of the Paranormal* (1996) and a detailed study of phenomena attributed to Victorian psychic DD Home, *The Sorcerer of Kings* (1993). *Independent 6 Sept 1996*

CLYDE TOMBAUGH

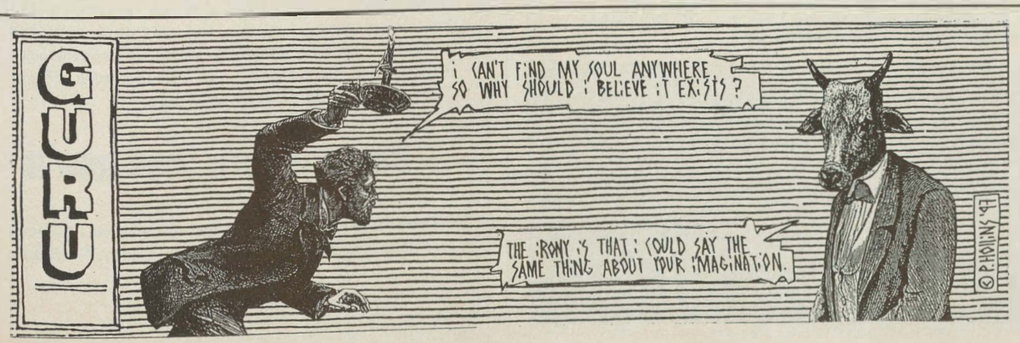
B. 4 FEB 1906 – D. 17 JAN 1997; 90

Tombaugh discovered the planet Pluto while still a farmboy in Kansas in 1930 and retired in 1973 from teaching astronomy at New Mexico State University. In a long life, Tombaugh reckoned he had studied over 90 million stars, but nothing matched the exhilaration of the moment he knew what Pluto was. *Saucer Smear* editor Jim Moseley recalled a long-forgotten UFO sighting by Tombaugh at his home in New Mexico in 1952: "[It] was written up in a then-famous article in *Life* magazine. [I] interviewed Tombaugh in person in 1953 and he told [me] of the cylindrical object with apparent lighted portholes which glided silently low over his home one night. He said he had no idea what it was..." *Times, 7 Feb; Saucer Smear, 10 Feb 1997.*

SUN YAO-TING

B. 1902 – D. BEIJING, 17 DEC 1996; 93.

The last (and probably best known because of it) imperial eunuch of old China, Sun was castrated at the age of eight by his father. This was no wanton act of cruelty, but one entered into voluntarily as, by qualifying for imperial service, he guaranteed his family some degree of privilege and shelter in those troubled times. Sun was among the eunuchs expelled from the Forbidden City in 1923 by Pu Yi, the last emperor, who feared they were plotting against him. Sun's penis was fried and preserved because, as a Buddhist, he believed he needed to be buried complete before he could reincarnate as a human. Unfortunately, fearing its seizure by Red Guards, a relative destroyed it. "Now I'll come back as a cat or a dog," lamented Mr Sun. He was found dead (from a coronary) on the floor of the Guanghua Temple, where he lived in recent years. *D.Telegraph 2 Dec; Guardian 20 Dec 1996. Economist 4 Jan; S.Telegraph 5 Jan 1997.*



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LION AROUND ON THE BEACH

ENTOMOLOGISTS NEED NO LONGER LOOK TO MAINLAND EUROPE WITH ENVIOUS EYES, FOR THERE IS A HEALTHY POPULATION OF ANT-LIONS ON OUR SHORES, BUILDING SAND TRAPS ON THE SOUTH COAST. KARL SHUKER INTRODUCES THE MANE EVENT

Britain has a native species of lion, hitherto overlooked by science, living and breeding in its countryside. Official! Lest ABC enthusiasts become too excited, however, I should point out that this particular lion is only an inch or so long.

The species in question is, of course, an ant-lion. Although closely related to lacewings and belonging to the taxonomic order Neuroptera, with their slender abdomen and long slim wings ant-lions superficially resemble miniature dragonflies or damselflies. However, they are readily distinguished externally by their conspicuous clubbed antennæ and the venation of their wings.

BRITISH LIONS: [Top] The ant-lion larva and the cunning pitfall traps they dig in the sand

Their memorable name they derive from their larvæ, which are wingless, stout-bodied, voracious predators with huge jaws. Larval ant-lions are famous for digging conical pits in sand and lurking concealed at the bottom, where they seize any ants or other luckless insects that unwittingly fall into their cunning traps.

British entomologists have always viewed these exotic insects with envious eyes, for although common in continental Europe, ant-lions were not thought to breed on mainland Britain (there is a species on Jersey). Nevertheless, a few adult individuals belonging to the species *Euroleon nostras* have been recorded at a few localities in East Suffolk over the years.

On 5 September 1931, CG Doughty caught one such specimen (erroneously identified at the time as a related species, *Myrmeleon formicarius*) in Gorleston. On 29 August 1988, a specimen that flew into a house in Corton, near Lowestoft, was photographed and released, before being identified from the photos by Dr AG Irwin. And on 21 July 1994, two ant-lions were found near the toilet block on the road leading to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds reserve at Minsmere by the reserve's warden, Geoff Welch. Their species was identified by Ipswich Museum entomologist Howard Mendel (*Entomologist's Record*, January/February 1996), and a third specimen was found squashed on the floor inside the toilet block on 31 August 1994, by Minsmere's assistant warden, D Fairhurst.

However, these were all assumed to be vagrants, blown across the Channel by freak winds (or even stowaways whose passage to Britain had presumably been assisted by residing unnoticed on maritime trading vessels travelling here from the continent) – but no more.

Not everyone has been convinced by the above explanations and several entomologists have voiced the exciting opinion that there could be a native, breeding population of *Euroleon* lurking undetected in Britain. In autumn 1992, Colin W Plant, Britain's National Recorder for Neuroptera, organised a field meeting to scour the East Anglian coast in search of ant-lions, but his optimism unfortunately went unrewarded. Following the discovery of the Minsmere specimens two years later, however, the possibility once more seemed quite promising, but there was one vital missing link that needed to be forged before the promising could become the proven. Only the discovery of larval ant-lions could confirm this insect's existence in Britain as a breeding population.

It was now the summer of 1996, and from 6 to 9 August Richard Cottle, Mike Edwards and Stuart Roberts were conducting an invertebrate survey of Suffolk Sandlings Heaths. During their survey, they traversed Walberswick National Nature Reserve, and were intrigued to espy at the base of a small cliff, formed by a partially buried root, a number of small conical pits. As they already knew about the recent finding of adult *Euroleon* specimens at Minsmere, they lost no time in examining the pits, and in the very first one they unearthed to their delight a living ant-lion larva, but this would only be the first of many – a very great many, as it turned out (*Entomologist's Record*, November/December 1996).

During the four days, the trio spotted approximately 300 ant-lion pits in this same area, more than 1,000 at Minsmere, a large population at Dunwich Heath, and a smaller one on Blaxhall Common, about 10 miles (16km) south-west of Minsmere - more than 3,000 pits in total, mostly on surfaces open to the sun and associated with small cliffs.

They even spied 15 freshly-emerged adult ant-lions, drying their gauzy wings before becoming airborne. There could no longer be any doubt - *Euroleon nostras* was a British lion.

It is not every day – not even every century – that a totally new taxonomic family of insects is added to Britain's official faunal checklist, thus confirming the exposure of *Euroleon* as one of the most significant episodes in the UK's modern-day natural history.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this case, however, is how such a distinctive species of insect (in the adult state, at least) as an ant-lion could remain undetected and unsuspected for so long by the entomological community in so zoologically familiar a land as the UK. Quite evidently, there is more to British cryptozoology than its popular media image of prowling ABCs and periscoping water monsters might have us believe.

Richard Cottle; Mike Edwards & Stuart Roberts. *Euroleon nostras* (Fourcroy, 1785) (Neur.: Myrmeleontidae) Confirmed as Breeding in Britain. *Entomologist's Record* Nov/Dec 1996, 108: 299-300.
CG Doughty. Ant-Lion in Suffolk. *Transactions of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society* 1931; 1: 228.
Howard Mendel. *Euroleon nostras* (Fourcroy, 1785) a British Species and Notes on Ant-Lions (Neuroptera: Myrmeleontidæ) in Britain. *Entomologist's Record* Jan/Feb 1996; 108: 1-5.
Claude Morley. Ant-Lion in Suffolk. Footnote. *Transactions of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society* 1931; 1: 228-229.
Colin W Plant. Autumn Field Trip to East Anglia - Ant-Lion Hunting. *Neuro News* 1992; 10: 9-10.

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❒ Serious ❒ Practical
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MONKEY DUMPER FINED

The story about the falling cows sinking a Japanese trawler [see page 17] raised a smile. For many years I worked with varied airline carriers worldwide, including Air America. Back in the 1950s, I got my first job as an operations clerk with a company called Seaboard and Western Airlines, now defunct, in Shannon and later spent three months with them at Heathrow. Seaboard was an American company whose main base was at Idlewild. One of their jobs was a sub-contract from KLM, hauling rhesus monkeys from Singapore to the United States. At that time everyone and everything entering the US had to be vaccinated and if anyone arrived with a dead animal, they would almost call the President to see what action they should take.

Seaboard would pick up the monkeys in cages and, as I remember, they would have 1,800 on each DC4 aircraft. The smell was so bad that dry cleaners in New York took out health insurance when crews handed in their uniforms to get them cleaned.

One of the organisers of this traffic was an Englishman called Lesley Mason, who employed a number of 'handlers' on each aircraft, one of whom was an Irishman called Ned Dowling. DC4s would usually fly westbound at 8,000ft (2,450m) to Gander and then down to New York City. Rather than get involved in the hastle of having to explain how some of these animals 'passed away' during the trip, the handler would open an emergency exit while out over the sea (pressurisation did not pose a problem as the DC4 would not, or more precisely could not, rise to the occasion) and dump the monkeys' mortal remains.

Just north of Boston a woman happened to be hanging out the washing in her back yard, when there was a dull thud and all her washing was suddenly coated with monkey entrails. Apparently, Ned Dowling was under the impression that the plane was still over the sea. As a result of this, Seaboard was taken to court and had to pay a fine of something like $25,000, which was phenomenal at that time.

Joseph Hennessy
Limerick, Ireland

Editors' note: We are reminded of a report in INFO Journal *No.7, (1970): Faye Swanson of 723 Stanyford Drive, Broadmoor, San Mateo County, California, stepped out into her yard at 8.05am on 26 October 1956 and found the body of a small monkey that had obviously fallen out of the sky during the night. It had struck her clothesline with such force that a solid 4x4in post was splintered. A spokesman at the nearby airport said that no regular airliner had been transporting monkeys during the night.* San Francisco Chronicle, 27 Oct 1956.

VILLLAGER NOT GREEN

Following the articles about RAF Warton in Lancashire, [***FT98:6, 41***], I can tell you they aren't testing any sort of secret aircraft. I've lived 200 yards from the main gate for 12 years and I've never seen any strange lights or anything bizarre. As for the complex being another Area 51, poppycock!

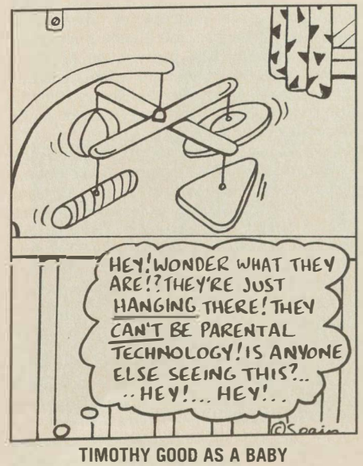
I've had too many friends who work there who know nothing of any odd goings on. You can't fart in Warton without the whole village knowing about it. As for the picture on page 6, it's a Lightning aircraft with the reflection from the snow.

Vikee Welch
Warton, Lancashire

DIFFERENT ANGLE ON GOD

I write to comment upon the review of *The Tomb of God* by Andrews & Schellenberger [***FT99:60***]. Having read this book, and those of Messrs Baigent, Leigh & Lincoln (BLL), I consider David Barrett's review to be a distortion, lacking in objectivity. The authors have not, as he has stated "rotated the geometry through any amount of degrees to make it fit their plans". Any rotation, and there only two (1½° and 15°), are constant and explained with reason and care. Furthermore, to state that they have used much material from BLL books is also inaccurate. Any reference to this material is simply to make the reader aware of the background, as for many people the BLL books would have been their introduction to the Rennes-le-Chateau story.

NR Croucher
Verwood, Dorset



TIMOTHY GOOD AS A BABY

DIGITAL LOCATION

I have always assumed that coincidences of the sort that you report happened to other people: that is, they happened to one other person among billions, providing just the sort of frequency at which such freakish events should occur.

Once it happens to you, your perceptions change. Nothing too remarkable: I took my partner's camera in for repair and the repair agency told me it would have to be sent overseas to the manufacturer. I left a hastily scrawled contact telephone number, so scrawled that the last digit looked like a nine, rather than a four. Two weeks at least, said the agency, don't ring us, we'll ring you.

A week later I was making a visit to another office – one that I visit 15 minutes in an average month. The phone rang, and the secretary said, in a puzzled tone, "Yes, he's here," and handed the phone to me with an "It's for you". It was the repair agency and the camera was ready unexpectedly early.

How anyone in my usual office had known where to put the call through I could not understand, since I hadn't told them where I would be. Only subsequently – after being told that indeed no-one had put a phone-call through – did I recall that the telephone number of the office I was visiting was identical to mine, except that the last digit was a nine instead of a four.

Paul Henderson
London

DANISH DOPPELGÄNGER

My name is Gunnar, I'm 15 years old and I live in Iceland. Last year, I and my family spent the dark of winter on Nyord, a tiny island in Denmark. A few houses away lived our very good friend Hilmar. One night, I walked over to his house, where my mum was paying a visit. I took the same route as usual, up the street behind the house, through the garden to the backdoor.

As I was going through the fence, I saw Hilmar opening the door and scanning the garden. He looked my way, but closed the door, without giving any indication that he had seen me. I came to the door and knocked. He opened it and told me that just a few seconds earlier he and my mum had heard a knock on the door. He looked out but saw nothing.

In the mythology of Iceland such a phenomenon is called a *fylgja*, a kind of spirit or ghost (or something) accompanying a person and announcing their arrival. It makes its presence known with noises, the person then comes to mind or pops up in conversation, or the cat announces the person's arrival by certain gestures. Some people have a strong *fylgja* which clearly precedes their coming.

On my way home I met a pitch-black cat under a lampost. It scared me a bit as cats were unheard of on the island. It must have crossed the same crazy bridge as my *fylgja*.

Gunnar Th Eggertsson
Reykjavik, Iceland

CHAOS AND EFFECT

With regard to Patrick Huyghe's Forum piece "In a Flap about Chaos and Effect" [*FT97:46*]: I feel that he should take another look at his historical data. Knowledge and ideas on sixth-century Europe have moved on considerably. The idea that comets brought about the sudden mass switch to Christianity is laughable in that there was no mass switch. Mass conversion took a long time and place names showing pagan areas prove the resilience of other religions in at least some areas. Also there is growing evidence that Christianity had never completely died out, even in Britain. The old idea of a complete collapse of civilisation after the Romans left as put forward by the likes of Sir Frank Stenton now has a growing number of challengers and is viewed as outdated by many leading academics using new forms of evidence such as landscape history. There was quite likely a base of Christianity to aid the converters' cause. Also, various areas of Europe were 'converted' at different times. Huyghe discusses the period around 540 AD, but Augustine did not arrive in England until 60 years later.

Ed Ward
Ed@lynchet.demon.co.uk

TESLA JUST A TEASE

David Guyatt [*FT99:34*] nicely sums up the popular misconceptions about Nikola Tesla's work which currently fire the dogma of several cults. The idea that Tesla's later inventions were suppressed by government agencies is a delusion – these inventions were non-existent. Tesla was an ingenious engineer and inventor, but drew on a rather flimsy theoretical education. Although he was often referred to as "Doctor" Tesla in his time, he never tried to gain an academic degree or pass an examination. His notes and patent applications are so incomplete that a number of his inventions, especially regarding the Colorado Springs experiment, are not properly understood today. Most of the current rumours about Tesla are based solely on speeches he made long after his last large-scale scientific venture, the Wardenclyffe project.

With the advent of theoretical physicists and mathematicians like Albert Einstein, Tesla's purely practical talents went out of fashion. Shortly after World War I, he didn't even operate a permanent laboratory. His torrent of patent applications slowed to a trickle and he acted mainly as a public figure, announcing grandiose projects at champagne parties without ever realising them. This is interpreted as the result of a conspiracy to suppress his world-shaking inventions by cutting his funding; however, he managed to keep up his *bon vivant* lifestyle till his death.

A great showman with talents bordering on those of a stage magician, Tesla very probably knew that he couldn't compete with the likes of Einstein, Bohr and von Neumann, lacking as he did their theoretical background. His situation was reflected by an event from his own past, when he had won the Niagara AC/DC war over the illiterate tinkerer Edison by the few scraps of theory he *did* know; but unlike Edison, who even went as far as to invent the electric chair as a public relations device against Tesla's concept of alternating current, Tesla was intelligent enough to realise that he had lost. So he kept his mouth shut, spent his time feeding pigeons and enjoying himself in the Players Club for the rest of his life. And every year or so, he announced the impending introduction of a world-shaking invention, without investing even a minimum of time in its realisation.

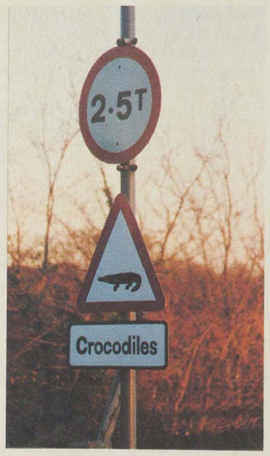
One could muse that these were the mad ravings of a loser, but to honour the great man I suggest an alternative solution: his wild ideas were a subtle hoax, hatched with his old friend Samuel Clemens, aka Mark Twain. Tesla admired Twain for his writing and humour, and the idea of scaring the new model army of theoretical scientists by announcing non-existent scientific inventions could just be the type of scam Tesla and Twain might have cooked up during a jolly candlelight dinner in a posh New York club.

Juergen Heinzerling
heinzerling_clan@t-online.de

CROCODILE SNAP

I took this photograph at Eastwood Lakes, a canal feeder reservoir consisting of three lakes near Solihull in the West Midlands, on Monday, 18 November 1996. The metal roadsign had been bolted to the post. The 2.5T weight limit refers to the road running along the top of the dam and the causeway between two of the lakes. Sometime during the previous night, the crocodile sign was added by persons unknown, and removed again (possibly as a souvenir) during the following Friday night.

Jon Chidwick
Earlswood, West Midlands



VIRAL ARMAGEDDON

I enjoyed David Guyatt's frightening feature on the Aum Supreme Truth Sect [**FT99:34**]. There is, however, something further that I would like to know about. In the *Irish Times* on 25 May 1995 there was an AFP and Reuter item headlined: "Cult may have planned to use Ebola virus."

To quote from the article: "Shoko Ashara toured Zaire, according to Japanese press reports. Japanese newspapers revealed an Aum publication carrying a report complete with photographs, showing that Mr Asahara had led a 100-strong Aum mission to Zaire in October 1992 for the purpose of taking "medical relief" to the area. The team left for Africa only a week after a Japanese man died from suspected Ebola infection following his return from Zaire, the newspapers reported. The party visited hospitals in Zaire known to treat Ebola victims [..] In Mr Asahara's book, published in March and entitled *A Catastrophe is Imminent in the Land of the Rising Sun*, his aide and biologist, Mr Seiichi Endo, named the Ebola virus as one of the existing 'virus weapons' expected to be used in the 'armageddon'."

Barry Kavanagh
Blackrock, Co.Dublin

SOCIAL COMMENT

It is less than surprising that the DSS denied employing the bogus social workers who attempted to abduct children in Cornwall [*FT98:14*]. The Department of Social Security, aka the Benefits Agency (BA), does not employ social workers; it administers social security benefits, as its name implies.

The BA does, however, employ benefit fraud investigators who might visit people unexpectedly at home, and in some circumstances take their order books. This gives rise to such an obvious scam, that impersonating these people is a crime.

Social workers are employed by the local authorities' Social Services Department and have statutory powers which include removing children from situations of actual or potential danger and locating them in a place of safety. In exceptional circumstances this might happen without warning, but there would be a police officer on hand if it did, as some people get upset and emotional at the suggestion that they have been doing horrible things to their kids.

Some local authorities recognise the confusion caused by the similarity of the initials DSS and SSD, and use a different name for their Social Services Department. Social workers in Sheffield, for instance, work in a department called Family and Community Services.

Social workers and Benefit Agency officials always produce identification on request. If they refuse, don't let them in. If their ID cardit is made of mysteriously light yet strong material and the letters seem to change before your eyes, it is probably too late anyway. You have been visited by the MIB/WIB.

Steve Howlett
Nuneaton, Warwickshire

RECALL AND RESPONSE

Your review of *Victims of Memory* [*FT99:57*] was somewhat biased. Unfortunately, you have fallen for the line of the British False Memory Society that memories do not emerge in therapy. In fact, it is one of the oldest and most frequent findings in nearly all forms of counselling or psychotherapy that people tend to present at first very bland versions of their childhoods. When approaching a therapist, they tend to say that they had "ordinary", "average" or "happy" childhoods. This is simply because they have never thought about it much. What then emerges in the ordinary process of therapy (no special techniques or assumptions being needed) is that their childhoods were more complicated than that; also much of the later life of the adult can be understood better once the family dynamics are laid bare. Many people are still working out their problems with their parents, even 40 years later.

This is all very well known, and not new at all. If most psychologists say they believe in it, this is not because they are overcome by the latest fad, but simply because of their own experience. Counsellors and psychotherapists experience it in two ways – first through their own therapy and their discoveries about their own childhoods, and second through working with their clients. It is simply not true that people only started recovering memories of their childhood in the 1980s, or that the recovered memory "school of therapy" started then and "quickly spread to the UK and other countries".

There is in truth no such school of therapy; a glance at any textbook on counselling or psychotherapy will tell you that it does not exist. There are no texts on it, there are no training schools for it, there are no therapists advertising themselves as "recovered memory therapists". This is all fantasy and make-believe.

John Rowan
North Chingford, London

OF FAG ASH AND FLIES

You recently carried a report of a young man bitten by a bot-fly in Belize [*FT97:19*]. A few years ago, while serving in the RAF, I rented a room with a mate who was in the same unit. After a few months he was posted away and then, after another couple of months, posted to Belize where he too was bitten by a bot-fly. This he was assured by the medical centre was merely a spot and it would go in its own time. It didn't and after visiting the centre and even pointing out the fact that spots don't wiggle under the skin, he took a friend's advice and sought out a 'wise woman' in a local village. She told him to spit in an ashtray, smear the paste over the spot and wait; then when it really began to wiggle, give it a squeeze. This, with the aid of a friend, was done, and the result was two healthy bouncing bot-fly larvæ. Needless to say, the medical centre refused to comment on such 'complimentary health methods'. Apparently the ash paste blocks up the tubes protruding above the skin that the lavæ use to breathe. They start to suffocate and head for the surface and fresh air, and with a helping hand can be removed. See, smoking can be good for your health!

M Chapman
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

RAIL PREMONITION

In 1986, I was a student at North Staffordshire Polytechnic. On the night of 2 March, I had a disturbing dream. I was with a group of people in the countryside. Above me was an electricity pylon and along one of the cables leading from it a man was walking as if on a tightrope. Suddenly, the man slipped, fell across the wires and was electrocuted. To my right a young woman walked past sobbing hysterically: "He's dead, he's dead." I looked to my left and saw a country lane lined with police cars and an ambulance. The police officers came up to us and led us away one by one. As they came to lead me away I ran off looking for a telephone to call my father. I found one but I couldn't get through. I then woke up.

The following weekend, I travelled to Doncaster to visit my father. On the journey back I caught a train from Doncaster to Sheffield, and as usual I sat right at the front of the first carriage. I regularly made the same journey, but this time was different. As I looked out of the window I experienced fear and sadness and felt that I would never travel that route again. I reached Sheffield without mishap and left the train to find my connection to Manchester. It turned out to be the same train. I had a few minutes to wait, so I took a walk to steady my nerves. When I returned, I passed the replacement train driver as he was climbing into the cab. I remember looking at him and feeling sorry for him, but I couldn't explain why. I went to board the front carriage, to sit at the front as usual, but at the last minute changed my mind and moved back to the third.

The train had just reached the western side of the Pennines, outside a village called Chinley, when it crashed head on with a locomotive coming the other way. Fortunately we were travelling slowly after an earlier stop at a signal, but our driver was killed and there were many injuries, the worst of them being in the front carriage. When news of how bad it was reached my carriage, a young woman who was standing in the aisle to my right started crying and called out: "He's dead, the driver's dead."

A few minutes later the emergency services arrived along a country lane running alongside the railway on my left-hand side. They came onto the train and started to lead the injured off one by one. I was taken to hospital but soon released. My first thought was to ring my father, but I couldn't get through to him as he was making calls to find out if I was okay.

Paul Willoughby
Tottenham, London

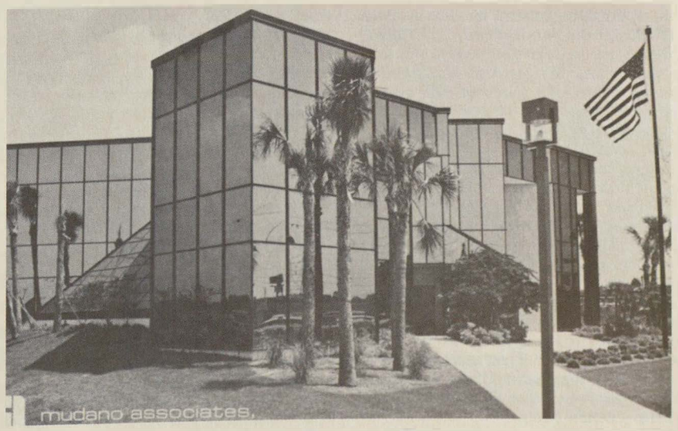
CLEARWATER ISIS

I am an employee at the firm of Mudano Associates Architects, Inc., the architectural firm that designed the building where the image of the Virgin Mary appeared in Clearwater, Florida [see *FT97:8*].

As there's a similar image beginning to form on the front of the building (where there is the same landscaping), it is highly probable that mineral deposits are the cause. It does not, however, detract from the beauty of the image, nor the wonder at its formation.

A little-known fact (outside of our area, of course), is that the opposite side of the building incorporates a pyramid shape (see photo), leading to the pertinent question: Is the figure Mary or Isis?

Sheri Morton Stanley
Clearwater, Florida



letters

HOW DEER CAME HERE

The photo of the animal found in Co. Wexford [*FT99:16*] clearly shows a male Sitatunga – *Tragelaphus spekei* and *not* a Nyala – *Tragelaphus angasii*. This semi-aquatic antelope is held by several zoos in the British Isles (including Belfast), but it's unlikely that they wouldn't notice if one was missing. More likely, some eccentric landowner with exotic species on their estate lost one and didn't bother to report it. Other explanations include an animal in transit escaping or even an escapee from Britain swimming the Irish Sea, although this is very unlikely. One thing is certain – it didn't teleport from Africa! [Editors note: How can you be *certain*?]

Alan Pringle
Chard, Somerset

RUNNING SCARED

Whilst recently reading Jacques Vallée's wonderful and thought-provoking *Passport to Magonia* (Contemporary Books, 1993) I had to smile at the unintentional humour of the following anecdote from his list of "Century of UFO Landings":

"September 12, 1952. sunset. Flatwoods (West Virginia):

A group of young people saw a 'meteor' land on top of a hill and went to the site with Kathleen Hill and three men. They observed a globe as large as a house making a throb-bing or hissing sound and a huge figure with glowing orange eyes nearby. About 4m tall, the figure had a red face and 'floated' toward the witnesses, who fled in terror. A lingering smell and skid marks were found."

If a 12ft (4m) tall, red faced, orange eyed alien floated towards me I am quite sure I would leave behind very similar evidence!

Dave Watkins
dave@giblane.nwnet.co.uk

VANISHING CREAM

The abductions related by Simon Moss [*FT95:51*] and Sandra Bonnett [*FT98:51*] might not be isolated to just to soft toys or to the Sixties. My incident happened in the early 1990s with tubes of E45 cream. My mother (I am only 17 now) would buy this cream to soothe the eczema on my legs. It would seem that after only a few uses of the cream, the tube would disappear from its usual home in the cosmetics basket by the fireplace. Frequent searches around the house would prove fruitless, so another tube would be bought. Only upon the purchase of a new tube, would the old one appear in its proper place.

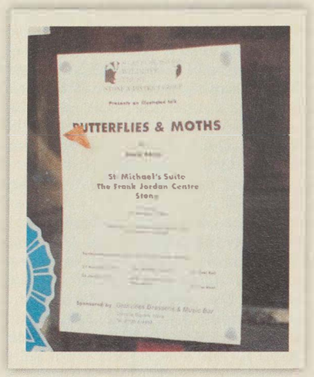
Could it be that whoever took the teddies of Simon and Sandra are looking for a way to treat them from their scars of abuse (wear from affection)? Even more sinister is the possibility that Santa Claus is stealing people's medicines and selling them in poor countries – which I doubt!

Jamie Shilton
1146@highdown.berks.sch.uk

READING BUG

After seeing this poster in a local butcher's shop window, I had to take a picture when I saw a butterfly perched upon it.

David Goodman
Stone, Staffordshire



FREUDIAN EXTENSIONS

I'm responding to Rupert Sheldrake's piece on the apparent ability of pets to predict the return home of their owners [*FT98:48*]. He advances the explanatory hypothesis of "morphic fields", suggesting that when we are conscious of something, then "in some sense, our mind reaches out to touch what we are looking at".

Reading these words, I was reminded of some odd jottings discovered among the papers of Sigmund Freud after his death, which I've puzzled over for some years. Freud wrote: "Space may be the projection of the extension of the psychical apparatus. No other derivation is possible. Instead of Kant's *a priori* determinants of our psychical apparatus. Psyche is extended; knows nothing about it." [*Standard Edition*, vol.23, p299].

What I take this to mean is that Freud had concluded that space is not merely an abstract form imposed by our minds upon experience, but a *real quality* of mind itself; in other words, Freud came to believe that mind (or 'psyche') actually possesses spatial dimensions. This seems to me strikingly in accord with Sheldrake's notion of "morphic fields" effectively connecting living organisms.

In my experience, many people who have undergone psychotherapy or analysis have tales to relate of bizarre coincidences, prophetic dreams, or telepathy arising out of their treatment – perhaps due to the unique and intense relationship (or "morphic field"?) that develops between patient and analyst. As a result of experiences of this type, Freud himself was a believer in telepathy and wrote two studies on the subject [see Peter Gay. *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (London: JM Dent, 1988. pp443-445)]. I can't help thinking that Freud's obscure musings on whether "psyche is extended" represent his own attempt to grope towards a theory of extrasensory communication, an area upon which Sheldrake's experimental studies might cast some more direct light.

However, I would advise Dr Sheldrake not to concentrate his research too much upon cats. Perhaps my cat does know when I am about to arrive home. Whether it cares enough to take any action in response to this knowledge is, of course, a separate question.

Duncan Barford
Brighton, East Sussex

TECHNICAL RING TO IT

I would like to add a comment on the "extra-sensory hearing" debate. At the age of 10, I had the brilliant idea of hitting an unexploded firework with a large sledge-hammer; you know – to see if it would go off! During the subsequent trip to the doctor I was told that the high-pitched ringing in my ears was tinnitus and might get better. During the next few months and conse-quently 20 further years, the intensity has faded, but is still noticeable during quiet periods. However, since then I have had the unerring ability to detect electrical appliances that are switched to standby, due to the seemingly loud high-pitch buzzing noise that they emit. Nobody else I have met has ever noticed this noise which I am often able to hear through closed doors. In a recent medical, a hearing test revealed that I had excellent hearing across the board, both high and low pitch.

Mostly, this noise comes from television sets and apparently sounds like the kind of noise created by the constructive inter-ference of two sound sources. While I am sure there is nothing particularly unusual happening, it does not quite fit the para-meters of deafness caused by tinnitus.

(Children please note that the detonation of explosives at close range is not a recognised method of improving high-frequency sound perception.)

Richard Tonge
Aberdeen, Scotland

EXPLODING WHALES

I have another exploding whale story for you. This appears in the *Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit – Antarctica* (p269) and summarises Lowell Thompson's biog-raphy of the Australian aviator Hubert Wilkins, who stopped off at the Norwegian whaling station at Whalers Bay, Deception Island, while returning from the first powered flight in Antarctica.

During the station's 1928 New Year's Day celebrations, "two drunk whalers climbed atop a pair of big sperm whales lying [..] awaiting processing. The whales had been cooking themselves from the heat of the blood inside their thick insulating blubber and were swollen with gas. One whaler thrust his long knife into this veritable whale-balloon, which promptly exploded hurling both men into the harbour, from where they had to be rescued by some of the few sober observers."

Matt Salusbury
sal@sem.hhs.nl

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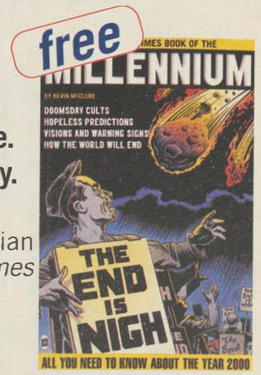

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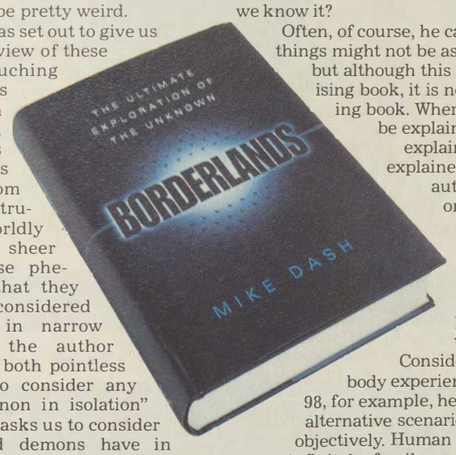
THROUGH A LOOKING GLASS DARKLY

BORDERLANDS

MIKE DASH HEINEMANN, LONDON 1997, HB, £16.99, pp501, NOTES & REFS, PLATES. ISBN 0-434-00335-2.

Surrounding the world we more or less know and feel certain about, there lie areas where our knowledge is ambiguous and there are no certainties at all – areas peopled by demons and apparitions of the dead, aliens from beyond Earth and creatures unrecognised by naturalists. Things appear and disappear in ways which contradict our experience; anomalies occur which challenge our hard-won scientific principles. It can be pretty weird.

Dr Mike Dash has set out to give us a panoramic overview of these borderlands, touching briefly on clusters of phenomena that range from mystery animals to aberrations of behaviour, from otherworldly intrusions to innerworldly experiences. The sheer diversity of these phenomena means that they are usually considered individually or in narrow categories; but the author argues that "it is both pointless and dangerous to consider any strange phenomenon in isolation" (p442). Instead he asks us to consider what ghosts and demons have in common with cryptozoological observations, and whether alien abductions might be the same kind of phenomenon as near-death experiences.



Fundamental to any exploration of the borderlands is the question: Do these phenomena have any objective reality? To whit, do abductions really *happen*, do yetis really *exist*? As human experiences, the answer is clearly yes: but when the Virgin Mary, say, is seen by Bernadette, but not by those standing beside her, her encounter is clearly not real in the same sense that our everyday encounters are real. "To what extent are we, ourselves, the phenomenon?" Dash asks on page 45, and the question runs through the whole of his inquiry.

In the first half of the book he charts the terrain of the borderlands, inviting us to ponder a profusion of well chosen sample cases from vanishing restaurants to bedroom invaders. Then he asks us to contemplate the implications – how can showers of frogs or seemingly spontaneous combustion occur in the universe as we know it?

Often, of course, he can show that things might not be as we are told; but although this is a rationalising book, it is not a debunking book. Where things can be explained, they are explained : but not explained *away*. Our author displays on every page the same fair-minded balance that was Charles Fort's legacy to the world. Considering out-of-body experiences on page 98, for example, he sets out the alternative scenarios fairly and objectively. Human testimony is seen as infinitely fragile and nature as infinitely devious, but square pegs are not to be ignored just because they don't fit into the neatly rounded holes we have prepared for them.

Although described on the cover as 'the ultimate exploration of the unknown', this book is certainly not that. Dash covers an astonishing amount of territory, but there are still many corners he leaves us to discover for ourselves – how could it be otherwise, when there are more than 2,000 years of strange experiences to be considered? Nor is his book ultimate in the sense of providing all the answers: at most, he offers three general conclusions – that we are wrong to try and cram borderland events into neat compartments; that we must not expect to find consistent explanations for phenomena which are invariably inconsistent and that we must expect to find more of the answers within ourselves than at first appears.

Clearly presented and lucidly argued, *Borderlands* is what all such books should be, both entertaining and instructive. The author does not simply ask us to marvel at the strangeness of things, he asks us to use our intelligence to consider their implications. If you're a newcomer to the borderlands you'll find this a challenging introduction to the enigmas that surround your everyday world: and even those to whom they are familiar will learn of new instances, and will be stimulated by perceptive insights and penetrating analysis.

Is there any more to this than fun and thrills ? Yes, Dash insists, because if only a tiny fraction of what is said to happen *actually* happens, sciences would have to be modified, histories rewritten. And because, even if all the rest never happened, the witnesses still thought them real, and we need to know why – what happens in the borderlands happens to people like you and me.

HILARY EVANS

COMPETITION 32

VIRGIN ON THE MIRACULOUS

NAME THE TOWN WHERE BERNADETTE SOUBIROUS SAW HER VISIONS OF THE VIRGIN MARY.

The first three correct entries to manifest themselves to the editors will each win a signed copy of *Borderlands* courtesy of publisher Heinemann. One entry only per person, please, to reach us by 30 September. *To enter, see page 61.*

THE UNDEAD: The Legend of Bram Stoker and Dracula

Peter Haining & Peter Tremayne

Marking the centenary of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, this is not a psychological portrait of the creator of the legend, but an investigation of his background and the facts behind the novel. Haining and Tremayne's extensive research unearths new information, fascinating connections and tenuous links, although Haining's long history of writing compendiums of heavily-fictionalised 'true' supernatural tales makes one wonder how trustworthy this is. Their documentation incorporates some gratifyingly weird anecdotes as well as one or two seemingly irrelevant digressions into loops of biographical detail.

What emerges is the importance of Stoker's Irish descent in the making of Dracula – the folk tales of Stoker's youth, his adolescence in freak-haunted, mist-wreathed Dublin, literary connections from Maturin to Wilde. Of interest is the idea that Irish folklore had a strong influence on the Dracula myth. The authors cite various legends to back this up: tales of blood-sucking demons such as *droch-fhola* – pronounced 'drok-ola' and meaning 'bad blood' – the fairy fortress of Dun Dreach-Fhola, inhabited by blood-sucking undead, the evil craft of metempsychosis, the fairy seductress Leahnah Shee and the sinister Celtic cheiftan Abhartach, who reappeared after death and sustained his vile corpse with the blood of the living.

Digressions aside, it's a pretty entertaining read with some good Gothic padding – ghostly muggings, unclothed crones crashing genteel dinner parties and the miraculous coup de Fort of the discovery of

The Undead, the original manuscript of Dracula, a century after its writing, in a trunk of dead rats in America.

The authors' detailed research, good references, leads and bibliography (complete with list of libraries) incite one to read *Dracula* for oneself or to track down the exact spot in London of Lucy's grisly demise.

CONSTABLE, LONDON 1997, HB £17.95, pp191, BIB. ISBN 0-09-475430.

FIONA SIMMONS

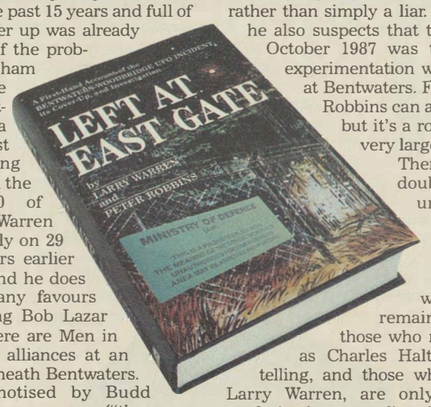
LEFT AT EAST GATE

Larry Warren & Peter Robbins

With the sacred cows of ufology fast becoming hamburger meat, it is no surprise to see attention returning to the impossibly tangled web of the Bentwaters/Rendlesham/Woodbridge incident. It's an inherent property of UFO events that the more media coverage they receive and the more witnesses that come forward, the less sense they seem to make; and this, the third book fully devoted to Rendlesham, proves no exception.

Things don't start well. In the forward, Anthony Grey, former Reuters foreign correspondent and best selling author, states that we are soon to have a "clearer comprehension of our place in the universe". What the book fails to point out is that Mr Grey is the head of the New Age-fascist British Rælian Movement and as such is eagerly awaiting the fall of democracy and the landing of the genetically pure Elohim in a new Jerusalem.

Larry Warren's part of the book reads like a bad novelisation of a poor film, incorporating elements from every major strand of UFO folklore of the past 15 years and full of lines like "the cover up was already beginning". One of the problems with Rendlesham has always been the inability of the witnesses to agree on a date for it, the best they can do being some time between the 25/26 and 29/30 of December. Larry Warren now settles for early on 29 December, 24 hours earlier than he used to, and he does not do his case any favours here. After meeting Bob Lazar and John Lear, there are Men in Black and unholy alliances at an alien UFO base beneath Bentwaters. After being hypnotised by Budd Hopkins, he discovers greys ("those little jerks"), abductions and missing time before, during and after his incident.



Hopkins' associate Peter Robbins makes a valiant attempt at untangling the sorry mess and almost loses his mind to paranoia in the process. He deserves credit for his frankness in telling his own bleak side of the story. Interviewing several other witnesses, Robbins finds that Warren clearly isn't telling the truth, but ultimately chooses to believe that he was the victim of a National Security Agency mind control experiment, rather than simply a liar. Being a Reichian, he also suspects that the great storm of October 1987 was the result of US experimentation with a cloudbuster at Bentwaters. For that gem alone, Robbins can almost be forgiven, but it's a rough diamond in a very large slagheap.

There can be little doubt that something unusual *did* happen in Rendlesham forest in December 1980 and that someone wants whatever it was to remain a mystery. But those who might know, such as Charles Halt, certainly aren't telling, and those who don't, such as Larry Warren, are only adding to the confusion by pretending that they do.

MICHAEL O'MARA BOOKS LTD, LONDON 1997, HB £15.99, pp490, INDEX, BIB, NOTES, APPENDICES, ILLUS, PHOTOS. ISBN 1-85479-231-8.

MARK PILKINGTON

SAVAGE SKIES

WARNER VISION, 1997, 2-TAPE SET, £19.99, 204 MINUTES, 'E' RATED; 0630-19173-3.

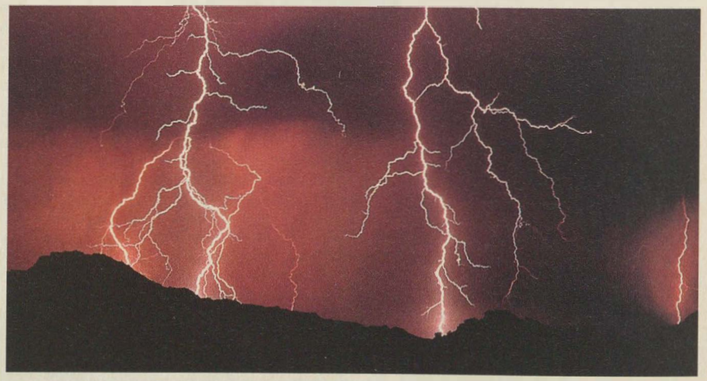
This two-tapes set of four documentaries made by Granada TV in 1996 and released by Warner Vision presents a 3½ hour spectacle of violent and dramatic weather conditions from all over our planet.

'Fire and Rain' begins with the torrential rainstorm that swept away the centre of the beautiful North Devon village of Lynmouth in 1952, a tragedy still imprinted on British memory, and proceeds to examine the phenomena of fogs and clouds, storms and monsoons. 'Riders on the Storm' continues with footage of tornadoes and lightning, including stunning scenes of lightning running along the underside of clouds. We also follow the storm-chasers right up to, and even into, these whirling destroyers. 'Monsters from the Deep' features typhoons, cyclones and hurricanes; storms born above the ocean and containing the power of several nuclear bombs.

The theme of 'The Winter's Tale' is cold and how man survives in the 50 million square miles of the planet under snow and ice. A clever graphic sequence takes us inside the crystalline structure of a snowflake... the only special effect involved, the programme-makers are quick to point out.

If you didn't catch the repeat showing of the series in May and June, then this video set has a visual treat in store for you. There are enough glimpses of really extreme weather conditions, beautifully filmed and terrifying in their disregard of man, for this to be considered prime viewing for Forteans.

BOB RICKARD



COMPETITION 33

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

WHICH SIGNATORY TO THE AMERICAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE FOUND THAT LIGHTNING WAS AN ELECTRICAL PHENOMENON?

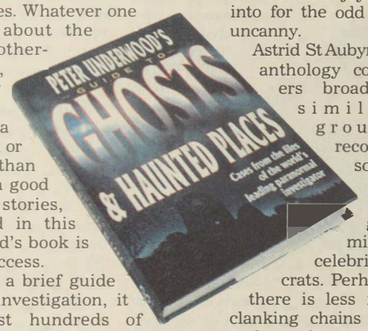
The first five correct entries to be caught by the storm chasers will each win a box set of *Savage Skies*, courtesy of Warner Vision. One entry only per person, please to reach us by 30 September. *To enter, see page 61.*

PETER UNDERWOOD'S GUIDE TO GHOSTS & HAUNTED PLACES

PETER UNDERWOOD

PETER UNDERWOOD'S GUIDE TO GHOSTS & HAUNTED PLACES. PIATKUS BOOKS, LONDON 1996, £14.99, HB, pp218, PLATES, INDEX. ISBN 0-7499-1665-6.

Ghosts seem to be going out of fashion these days – not as modern or as readily marketed as aliens, presumably – so it's nice to see an old parapsychological warhorse like Peter Underwood bringing out a new selection from his files. Whatever one might believe about the existence or otherwise of ghosts, there can be few more pleasant ways to spend a sunny afternoon or a chilly evening than curled up with a good book of ghost stories, and approached in this light, Underwood's book is a resounding success.



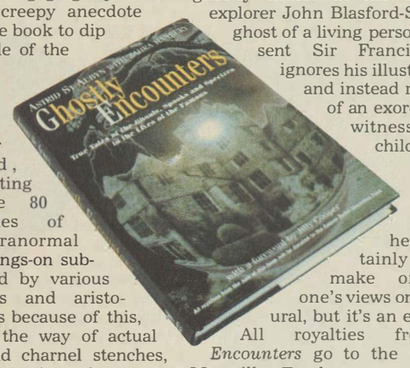
Opening with a brief guide to paranormal investigation, it goes on to list hundreds of instances of hauntings, one-off sightings and occasional 'bad feelings'. It doesn't break any new ground and some of the theoretical speculation treads thin parapsychological ice. These caveats aside, Underwood's engaging style and easy way with a creepy anecdote make it an enjoyable book to dip into for the odd tale of the uncanny.

GHOSTLY ENCOUNTERS

ASTRID ST AUBYN WITH ZAHRA HANBURY

GHOSTLY ENCOUNTERS. ROBSON BOOKS, LONDON 1996, £12.95, HB, pp146. ISBN 1-86105-045-3.

Astrid St Aubyn's anthology covers broadly similar ground, recounting some 80 tales of paranormal goings-on submitted by various celebrities and aristocrats. Perhaps because of this, there is less in the way of actual clanking chains and charnel stenches, and rather more in the way of local mythology concerning remote stately piles. Some of the contributors are of some interest to Forteans – arch-skeptic Patrick Moore contributes a story of ghostly music in his drawing-room, explorer John Blasford-Snell tells of a ghost of a living person and the present Sir Francis Dashwood ignores his illustrious ancestor and instead recounts a tale of an exorcism which he witnessed in his childhood.



Again, there's nothing new or spectacular here, and certainly nothing to make one re-assess one's views on the supernatural, but it's an enjoyable read.

All royalties from *Ghostly Encounters* go to the Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund.

JOE McNALLY

UFO 1947–1997: Fifty Years of Flying Saucers

Hilary Evans and Dennis Stacy [Ed]

The UFO phenomenon poses the most baffling question of the 20th century: just what is going on? On the one hand we have 'abduction' researchers telling us that humanity is in regular contact with extraterrestrials, while on the other, debunkers reduce it all to a sideshow concatenation of psyche, culture and perception. Would that it were that simple! Following in the template set by *FT*'s *UFOs 1947–1987* a decade ago, *UFO 1947–1997* offers 31 essayists the welcome chance to strut their ufological stuff. The names here represent the cream of the serious ufological crop and whether you choose to believe them or not, these people know what they are talking about.

Fittingly, Kenneth Arnold's ur-sighting is represented by his own account of that fateful day in 1947. People had been seeing unexplained ærial phenomena for centuries, but Arnold's sighting and newsman Bill Becquette's subsequent coining of the phrase 'flying saucer' served to focus the imagination of a waiting world. The portals were opened.

All the salient motifs of ufology are represented here, from carstops to cattle mutilations, physical traces to saucer cults. Balls of light jostle with ghost rockets for your attention and as each chapter is devoured, a new slant on the phenomenon becomes apparent. For instance, any ufologists languishing under the belief that UFO flaps and hot spots are evidence of a physical phenomenon would do well to consider John Rimmer's overview of the Warminster phenomenon. In retrospect, what was once a mainstay of the British ufological scene now seems quaint, almost twee. What hope then for Gulf Breeze and Bonnybridge? Time will tell, but the signposts are here.

But just when you're ready to shout 'case closed, next mystery please', along comes a doozy. Like Ray Fowler's account of the Allegash abductions. Here, four men were 'taken' from their canoe while fishing in the wilderness, following the appearance of an 'intelligent' light. Their experience and subsequent narratives, admittedly retrieved mainly by hypnosis, make for puzzling reading. Puzzling that is, until you read Patrick Huyghe's razor-sharp analysis of the rise and rise of the Hopkinsonian abduction scene in New York in which he uses the alleged numbers of abducted Americans (one million!) to illustrate the sheer ludicrousness of the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH).

Whether believer or sceptic, the writers put their cases eloquently and with feeling. None more so than Jacques Vallée whose journal extracts give a very human snapshot of a life in ufology. Vallee's diaries show the building bricks of the subject being considered and manipulated before they became part of the canon. This is ufology at its best, alive and kicking, ripe for meaning to be distilled from mystery.

As the evidence is sifted and balanced by ufologists of many persuasions – and with more than one-third of the essays being penned by ufologists living outside the Americas, no one can accuse the book of having a cultural bias – the only conclusion you can reach is that the UFO mystery is of far greater magnitude than the join-the-dots ufologists would have us believe. Conversely, the 'truths' discovered so far teasingly point only to natural phenomenon, human perception and culture. This is exemplified by Maillot and Scornaux's gentle dissembly of the Trans-en-Provence case, long held by ufologists to be a bastion of the physical trace genre and one investigated and pronounced unexplained by the official French UFO research team, GEPAN. And on, until the valedictory chapters by Hilary Evans and Jenny Randles which spell out a few home truths. These might be unpalatable to the hard core ETHer, but to the Fortean ufologist they make perfect sense. Evans insists that we should not cling to any one UFO case or theory, as one by one they fall to explanation; Randles makes a case for getting out there and investigating, to "see that behind the illusion of ufology as it is popularly believed there is a phenomenon very worthy of study".

Most UFO books artlessly reduce the subject to entertainment, people's traumatic experiences being paraded for ego and profit until the next fashionable theory comes along. You won't find any of that in *UFO 1947-1997*; instead you'll find sincere thinkers of all hues offering insight and illumination into the dark corners of the UFO mystery. A mystery no less perplexing now than at any other time and one which should lead us all to share the view of *Saucer Smear* editor Jim Moseley when he says: "My fascination with the subject continues, and I only hope that I – or any one of us – live long enough to solve the mystery." We won't of course, but we'll have fun trying.

JOHN BROWN PUBLISHING, LONDON 1997, HB, £16.99, pp272, BIB, INDEX. ISBN 1-870870-99-9.

ANDY ROBERTS

reviews

ALSO RECEIVED

WEIRD WEATHER
Paul Simons

Encyclopædic and entertaining trawl through the Fortean aspects of meteorology, from frog falls to climate changes. A great gift for a young scientist.
Little Brown, London 1996, hb £15.99, pp306, bib, photos. ISBN 0-316-87703-4.

GODDESSES, GUARDIANS AND GROVES
Jack Gale

Comprehensive exploration of the ancient landscape of Greenwich... but seemingly unaware of Steve Moore's early articles in *FT*.
Capall Bann Publishing, Freshfields 1996, pb £10.95, pp216, photos, illus, maps, bib. ISBN 1-898307-50-4.

LEGACY FROM THE STARS
Dolores Cannon

A hypnotherapist believes we are all reincarnated aliens. In the light of the Heaven's Gate tragedy this must be seen as irresponsible nonsense.
Ozark Mountain Publishers, Box 754, Huntsville, AR 72740. USA 1996, pb $15, pp320, illus. ISBN 0-9632776-9-3.

KING ARTHUR'S CRYSTAL CAVE
Donald Cyr

Cyr locates the legend of King Arthur sleeping under the hill in Scotland through his 'science' of archæometrology.
Stonehenge Viewpoint, 800 Palermo Drive, Santa Barbara, CA 93105 USA 1997, pb $10 or £7 inc. p&p, pp160, index, illus. ISSN 0140-654X.

THE WORLD PICTURES
Donald Eichert

Exercise in 'applied philosophy' in the form of discussions of weighty matters by fictitious denizens of the *suq* (market) in Dubai.
Minerva Press, London 1996, pb £7 99, pp277. ISBN 1-85863-728-7.

GHOSTS
Ronald Finucane

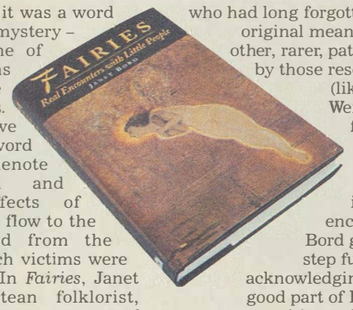
Subtitled 'Appearances of the Dead & Cultural Transformation', this is a welcome reprint of Finucane's 1984 wide-ranging history of the European belief in ghosts.
Prometheus Books, Amherst, NY1996, pb £[??], pp232, index, notes, plates. ISBN 1-57392-068-1.

REVIEWED BY BOB RICKARD AND STEVE MOORE

FAIRIES: Real Encounters with Little People

Janet Bord

The word 'fairy' has become so debased that when it is not being used derogatorily it conjures an image of a grotesquely twee cherub of Disneyesque 'reinvention'. Yet before the Christians demonised it, it was a word of power and mystery – the touchstone of all that was inexplicable for centuries. For example, we still use the word 'stroke' to denote the sudden and crippling effects of reduced blood flow to the brain, derived from the belief that such victims were 'fairy-struck'. In *Fairies*, Janet Bord, a Fortean folklorist, presents a re-assessment of the subject.



The notion that we share our landscape with magical beings goes back beyond the Bronze Age and can be found in most early and archaic cultures. It was all but stamped out in Europe by the spread of Christianity and not until Victorian times did pioneering folklorists begin gathering lore and experiences in the growing awareness that these were the fast-fading remnants of a universal animism.

Since those first and still great studies, scholars of fairylore have taken different paths. Most have treated the subject as a form of cultural archæology, examining in a detached fashion the fragments unearthed in old records or the current traditions of rural folk who had long forgotten their original meaning. The other, rarer, path is trod by those researchers (like Evans Wentz) who find that people are still reporting such encounters. Bord goes one step further in acknowledging that a good part of Forteana concerns apparitions of strange entities of one sort or another and so she includes stories from the annals of ufology, ghosts, shamanism, religious visions and other fields.

Bord abandons any attempt to prove fairies' objective reality, yet acknowledges that 'something' is going on, psychologically and culturally, that is remarkably widespread and consistent. Universally, they are referred to as the 'Good People' (or similar honorifics) despite (or because of) a reputation for being capricious and malicious. Nor were they always 'Little People'; as shape-changers, they could modify their appearance to suit the occasion, often manifesting in human stature or as giants. Some cultures have regarded them as "the lost souls of the dead, or fallen angels" or a kind of 'race memory' of primitive ancestors and, recently, they've been annexed by ufologists (such as Jacques Vallée) who see aliens as high-tech fairies.

Fairies benefits from Bord's life-long interest in the subject which, combined with her Fortean eclecticism, provides a valuable modern insight into all aspects of the subject. Alongside the traditional sources, she presents new material, much of it personal testimony of encounters with 'little beings'. As someone who has long been fascinated by this material myself, I have no hesitation in recommending *Fairies* as the best single introduction to the subject.

MICHAEL O'MARA, LONDON 1997, HB, £15.99, pp182, INDEX, NOTES, BIB, PLATES, ILLUS. ISBN 1-85479-698-4.

BOB RICKARD

EXCHANGE MAGS EXCHANGE MAGS EXCHANGE MAGS EXCHANGE

EARTH MYSTERIES

3RD STONE calls itself 'The Magazine for the New Antiquarian', which about sums it up. Excellent coverage of earth mysteries, archæology, anthropology, folklore etc. Summer 1997 has Civil War ghosts, Avebury and death in prehistory. *PO Box 961, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2TS, UK.*

AT THE EDGE'S June 97 issue is a sex, gender and archæology special, and is easily one of the most interesting publications in the antiquarian field so far this year. Well researched and tightly argued pieces on spinning in myth and folklore and a wonderful article by Hilda Davidson on women's disorderly social rituals through history. *2 Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough LE12 6UJ, UK.*

THE LEY HUNTER is the grandparent of them all, and is the most consistently stimulating of the current EM mags. Summer 1997 issue has Ulrich Magin on death roads, UnConvention97 guest Robin Heath on Stonehenge and the calendar and Marian Youngblood on the preservation of a pictish symbol stone. *PO Box 258, Cheltenham, Gloucester GL53 OHR, UK.*

UFOs

JUFOF, the *Journal für UFO-Forschung*, is, as you may surmise, in German, but helpfully includes a sheet of brief English summaries of its contents. *Gesellschaft zur Erforschung des UFO-Phänomens (GEP) e.V, Postfach 2361, D-58473 Lüdenschied, Germany.*

SKEPTICS' UFO NEWSLETTER is produced by venerable UFO skeptic Philip Klass. Entertaining and opinionated, although Klass is an idiosyncratic writer and can sometimes ***seem a little enthusiastic.*** Always of great value. *404 "N" Street SW, Washington DC 20024, USA.*

UFO UNIVERSE has a tendency to push the boundaries of credulity, and their *1997 Update* is no exception. *Chupacabras* (again), European UFOs and, surprisingly, a useful entry-level article on Fort. *GCR Publishing Group, 1700 Broadway, New York NY10019, USA.*

THE ARMCHAIR UFOLOGIST is a gossip sheet about the British UFO scene by sometime *FT* correspondent Andy Roberts. Very funny, and contemptuous of many of the sacred cows of ufology. *84 Elland Road, Brighouse, West Yorkshire, HD6 2QR, UK.*

THAT WHICH CANNOT BE NAMED

THIS STRANGE EARTH is the new title for Dan Brinkmeyer's sublime *Strange World*. Lyrical and surreal, this is probably the most Fortean 'zine published *anywhere* at the moment. The quirky stories and scratchy pen drawings make this an individual publication. *1174 South Home, Oak Park, IL 61074, USA.*

THE NEW AGER has triumphantly shambled to a second issue. Still as funny as it is well-observed – "Want to scream and shout? Draw on the wallpaper? Torture the pets and pester everyone in the house? You might be suffering from 'Inner Child Next Door Syndrome'..." They got hate mail after their last mention here! *20 Coronation Terrace, Truro, Cornwall TR1 3HJ, UK.*

FOLKLORE

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS is a potpourri of news clippings and short articles by various contributors; issue 29 covers subjects as diverse as Bibles which stop bullets, nasal intruders and our old friend the stolen dead granny. *5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, TS25 2AT, UK.*

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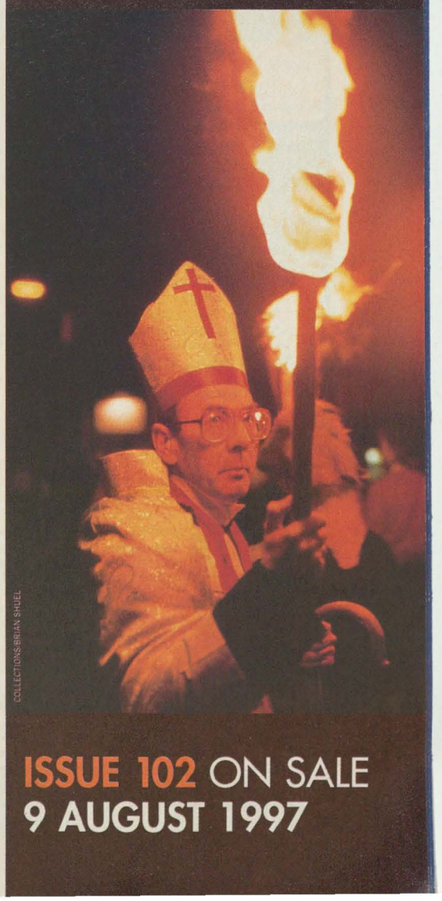
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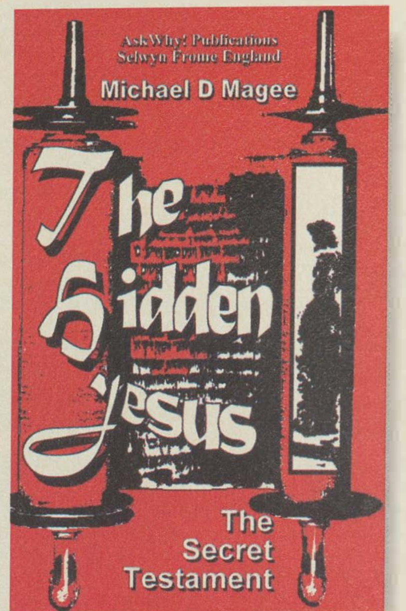

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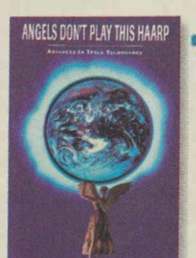

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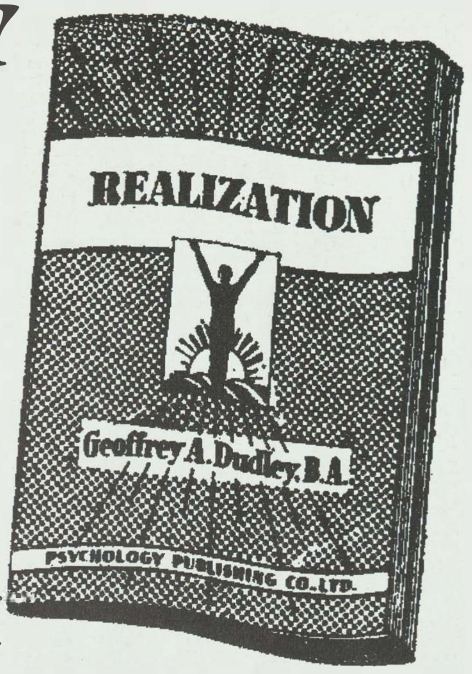

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FF8 AUGUST 1997

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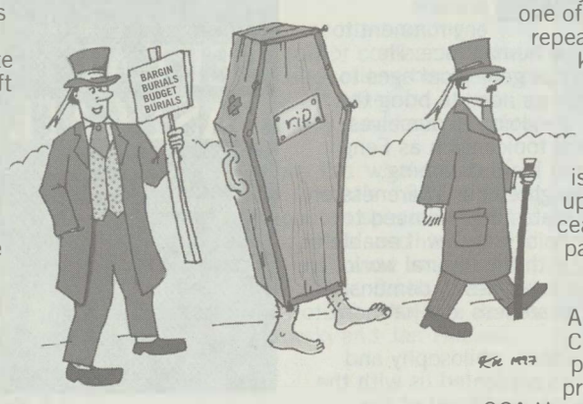
LEGAL LARKS

Fortean Times is well known for collecting tales of strange crimes from around the world. More rarely, stories reach us of bizarre trials.

In April, a Los Angeles family sued the Angelus funeral home after they allegedly stuffed the late Clarence Freeman Jr, 6ft 9in tall, into a coffin three inches too short for his body. In their defence, staff at the home explained that they were only trying to keep costs down for the bereaved family; they had, they explained, used a standard 6ft 6in coffin in order that they would not have to pay for a custom-made coffin, grave and vault. (CNN, 9 Apr)

In May, a particularly foolhardy driver found himself in court after driving a Porsche which had lost one of its wheels for eight miles along the M8 in Scotland, at speeds of up to 80mph. Edwin Coughtrie, 31, pleaded guilty to dangerous and careless driving and failing to provide a breath specimen. The court heard that Coughtrie had left Glasgow's Finnieston Street late at night, and had hit a parked car with such force that his front nearside wheel, brakes and suspension unit had been ripped from their mountings and left lying on the road. He then drove along the Clyde Expressway, through the Clyde Tunnel and along the M8 to Paisley. Worried drivers shadowed Coughtrie after seeing him drive along the motorway with sparks showering from the underside of his car. One motorist followed him while giving a running commentary to police via his mobile phone. He was tracked to his home, where officers found him trying to hide behind a chair. (Scotsman, 8 May)



At the start of June, an Australian geologist failed in an attempt to take a creationist to court for breaching fair trade laws by making false claims during a 1992 lecture tour. Professor Ian Pilmer had mortgaged his house to finance his case against Allen Roberts. Federal court judge Ronald Sackville dismissed the proceedings, after ruling that the legislation did not apply because Roberts was not pursuing a commercial venture aimed at profit. However, he also ruled that Roberts had made false representations in describing his explorations of what he claims is the resting place of the Ark. In a seperate judgement, Roberts was found to have breached copyright by claiming the work of Ark researcher David Fasold as his own; he was ordered to pay Fasold $2,500 (£1170). (Reuter, 2 June)

One of the more remarkable cases to reach the courts recently is that involving the eminent mathematician, Sir Roger Penrose, and the sanitary paper manufacturer Kimberly-Clarke. According to Sir Roger, Kimberley-Clarke has stolen one of the unique, non-repeating tiling patterns known as "Penrose Tiling" for their Kleenex Quilted toilet rolls.

A High Court writ issued in April called upon Kimberly-Clarke to cease production of the paper and requested an account of the company's profits. Although Kimberly-Clarke originated the paper, it is now produced in the UK by SCA Hygeine Products; their vice-president, Harry Tintner, said withdrawal of the product was "out of the question", but said that Kleenex Quilted was shortly to be relaunched with a new design. (D. Telegraph 12 Apr)

King Arthur found himself stripped of his sword and his power at Bow Street Magistrates' Court. Arthur Pendragon had been arrested during April's "Reclaim the Streets" march in London for having a broadsword in a public place. He had refused bail as he would have had to give up his sword, Excalibur. At a hearing in Bow Street, a magistrate refused to order the sword's return. Pendragon was reportedly intending to take the case to the high court. (D. Telegraph 15 Apr)

WEIRD WORLD

• DOSE OF THE CRABS
South African fishermen were facing disaster after a "red tide" caused crayfish to pile up on the shore near Cape Town. Thousands of the crustaceans crawled onto land to avoid a plague of phytoplankton which had been reducing oxygen levels in the sea. As the crayfish are a delicacy, costing about £15 at restaurants, hoards of would-be beachcombers soon descended on the area and began loading up. Entire families were arriving and walking off with as many of the crayfish as they could carry. (CNN, 7 Apr)

• DOG EAT MAN
A stray hunting dog mauled to death a meat worker who had befriended it only days before. Koro Dinsdale, 59, died on April 6th after a "frenzied" attack by the bull terrier cross. He had been found by his sons with bite wounds over 90% of his body after going out to pick watercress with the bull terrier and one of his own dogs. The dog was shot dead after trying to attack family members who were trying to reach Dinsdale's body. (Times 8 Apr)

• ISLAMIC IRE
The Council on American-Islamic relations has asked for an apology from shoe company Nike. Their complaint is that the logo used on some of their shoe samples resembled the word "Allah" in Arabic. The original logo resembled flames, and was intended to be used with a line of shoes called Air Bakin', Air Melt, Air Grill and Air B-Que; however, Nike said that they had already changed the logo after it was noticed by their eastern European office. (AP 9 Apr)

• PLUMB LOCO
A plumber trying to unclog a drain in Wisconsin thought he had found a blockage; in fact, he had found a small child. His "plumber's snake", a long steel cable used to dislodge obstructions in pipes, went astray somewhere in the pipe network, emerged from a roof vent, and found its way into the back garden, where a ten-year-old child was playing. She became entangled in the cable, at which point the plumber thought he had found the obstruction and began to pull on the snake to clear it. Shannon's brother was able to alert the plumber to her plight, and serious injury was averted. (USA Today, 9 Apr)

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WEIRD WORLD

• HOLES IN ONE
Two women golfers who hit holes in one on the same green within seconds of each other were astonished when one of them managed to repeat the feat for the benefit of television cameras. An ITN crew was interviewing Suzi Toft and Jill Dyke, who had previously both holed the 116-yard fourth in one, when Mrs Toft gave her repeat performance. The 72-year-old, who is ladies' captain of the Trentham Golf Club, said "It's out of this world. We were demonstrating how we did it and my ball went straight in again.". Mrs Dyke then followed this by landing her tee shot within 12 inches of the cup. Ladbrokes quoted odds of over 100 million to one on their original double hole-in-one. (D. Telegraph, 10 Apr)

• JAWS V
A shark believed to be extinct was caught by Malaysian fishermen, the World Conservation Union announced in April. The Borneo River Shark, a freshwater species, was caught earlier in the year in a river in Sabah State, northern Borneo, and preserved in formaldehyde. It was identified in March by a visiting team of scientists. The only other preserved specimen is in a Viennese museum, and was taken from a river in Borneo around a century ago. (CNN, 10 Apr)

• STOP OR THE TRIBE GETS IT
The Colombian U'wa tribe has threatened to commit mass suicide unless plans to drill for oil on tribal land are abandoned. The tribe's Robert Caberia delivered the ultimatum to Occidental Petroleum in May, citing a tribal legend that a group of U'wa committed mass suicide in the 17th century to protest against the occupying Spaniards. Occidental has refused to comment. (D. Telegraph, 9 May)

• YES SIR, THAT'S MY BABY
A Danish actress spent two days in jail in New York after leaving her baby outside a restaurant while she and her boyfriend ate. Annette Sorensen, 30, also had her baby taken into care. She had left the child in its pushchair outside the restaurant, where it was noticed by a passer-by who called the police. When her boyfriend, Exavier Wardlaw, tried to intervene, he was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct. Sorensen later told a court, "I didn't think twice about it. We do this in Denmark all the time." (D. Telegraph, 14 May)

• WHO?
Hospital staff and police were baffled when two deaf-mutes turned up at a New Jersey hospital without any form of identification, but with a typed note explaining their medical needs. They were also carrying $100, some food stamps, anti-seizure medication, and some grapes and raisins. Neither could read or write. They were later identified as Jose Gomez and his mother, Lydia Espina. Police have yet to discover how they came to be at the hospital. (CNN 15 May)

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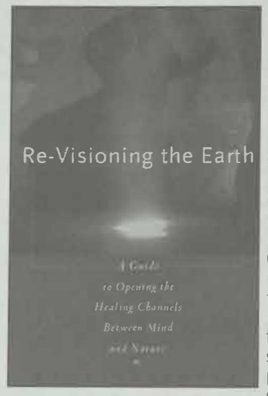

Revisioning the Earth is a practical guide to using the power of nature to heal ourselves. Paul Devereux, who regularly works with the International Consciousness Research Laboratories Group asserts that it is not the earth that we need to protect, but rather that we must sustain our present environment to ensure the survival of the human race. He suggests that the earth has geological ages to recover from us and that we need to bring the focus back to what we are doing to ourselves.

Discussing individual topics such as Feng Sui, herbal medicine and lucid dreaming, Devereux attempts to heighten our awareness of our place on earth. He states that we need to develop a new 'ecopsychology' that will enable us to reestablish harmony with the natural world. He has developed practical exercises to demonstrate how we can bring this awareness and harmony to our everyday lives.

Using a blend of science, philosophy and psychology, Devereux has presented us with the opportunity to improve the likelihood of the survival of the human race; so much so that Revisioning the Earth has been described as 'a survival manual for the 21st century' (Stanley Krippner, Ph.D.).
304 pages paperback, photos, illus, index, bib, refs

ALIEN CONTACT The First 50 Years **£13.99**
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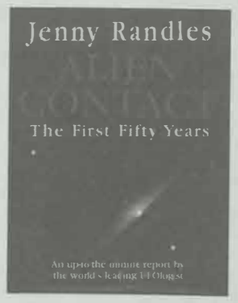

Jenny Randles chronicles the first fifty years of ufology as we currently perceive it. Commencing with the infamous Roswell incident, Randles details the most prominent UFO related encounters of the last half century, year by year.

Placing each incident in its social context, Randles discusses developments in scientific research and space exploration together with science fiction writing and films, contextualising public opinion of UFOs at various stages of this continually evolving subject. Topics raised include little green men, abductions, the Men in Black and government cover-ups, together with discussion of specific incidents.

Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the first 'flying saucer' sighting, this is an informative study of the history of UFOs by one of the world's leading ufologists.
144 pages hardback, illus, photos, index, bib

LEFT AT EAST GATE **£14.99**
A First Hand Account of the Bentwaters-Woodbridge Incident, its Cover-Up and Investigation
Larry Warren and Peter Robbins SAVING £1

Larry Warren and Peter Robbins are a former US Air Force security guard and an independent researcher respectively. They relate their personal experiences of the Bentwaters-Woodbridge incident in Rendlesham Forest in late December 1980, and their subsequent research.

This is primarily Warren's autobiographical account with occasional counter-interjections from Robbins. Spanning Warren's life from childhood through to the present day, Left at East Gate focuses heavily on what Warren considers to be his quest for the truth. Written as fact in the style of fiction, Warren's credulity is tested to the limit. One notable example involves a UFO encounter on the first night that Warren and Robbins visit Rendlesham Forest together.

Warren and Robbins state that even if they cannot prove conclusively that they encountered a UFO, there are still many questions that need to be asked, particularly as this incident took place at a major NATO nuclear arms store. Whether or not one believes their accounts, this is an interesting approach to one of the most important UFO cases in the UK.
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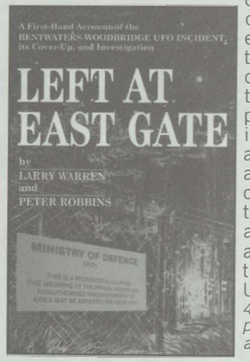

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Award-winning investigative journalist Antonio Huneeus has edited a comprehensive guide to Soviet thought on a variety of Fortean subjects.

Following the political, cultural and economic changes in the USSR in the late 1980s and the early 1990s a forum has developed whereby Russians are able to openly discuss what they call 'anomalous phenomena'. Originally published in Soviet newspapers, magazines and journals, this compilation of articles indicates that Soviet interest in Forteana is prolific and varied, with discussions on topics such as the search for Atlantis, encounters with UFOs, the Bermuda Triangle, parapsychology and the Abominable Snowman.

First published in 1991 and now out of print, this is one of the last chances to buy this invaluable introduction to the history of Soviet involvement in research into strange phenomena.
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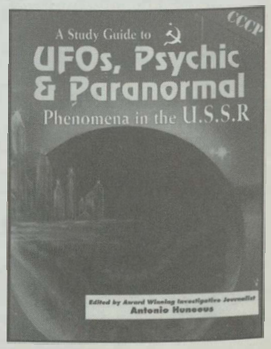

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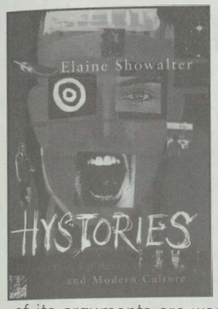

HYSTORIES: HYSTERICAL EPIDEMICS AND MODERN CULTURE **£15.50**
Elaine Showalter SAVING £1.50

'Mass hysteria' is often used as a convenient way to explain Forteana ranging from visions of holy figures to mass faintings and mysterious illnesses. This book has courted controversy by claiming that several other, more accepted phenomena may originate in hysteria as well.

'Hystories' attempts to examine the history of hysteria, and uses this analysis to look at various modern trends, ranging from chronic fatigue syndrome to multiple personality disorder, ritual satanic abuse and alien abduction, and the way that they are presented and diagnosed.

While it doesn't focus specifically on mass hysteria and doesn't reach any firm conclusions about the origins of the cases it discusses, 'Hystories' presents some interesting theories about the way that public awareness of some conditions can affect the way that they spread and are treated. Some of its arguments are weak and its evidence is often anecdotal. Nevertheless, this book is a singular attempt to look at an often-neglected area of Fortean study.

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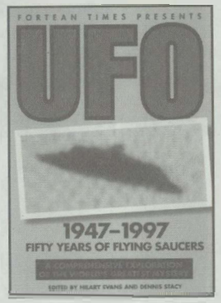

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WEIRD WORLD

• DRINKA HALFA GALLONA MILKA DAY
An addiction to full-cream milk was being blamed for the death of a 26-year-old van driver. A post-mortem on Richard Goymer, who downed up to five pints a day, determined that he died of a heart attack after his arteries became clogged with fatty deposits. He had begun drinking milk in quantity at the age of 14; his mother remembered having four pints a day delivered and still having to buy more. The British Nutrition Foundation said that "Milk should be part of a good mixed diet but never in this quantity. We think a daily pint is probably a bit too much these days." (Times, 16 May)

• IMPLANT ABDUCTION
A director of a cosmetic surgery firm was accused of stealing breast implants after her former boss and lover noticed a change in her shape. The unidentified woman was alleged to have taken the implants just before leaving the London clinic and had them implanted at another surgery. Her former employer saw her at a nightclub, and immediately noticed that her figure was much altered. She maintained "It was the first thing I had ever stolen in my life. It was not stealing. It was something I was going to confide in him later." (D Telegraph, 21 May)

• TAMAGDTCHI TRAUMA
A psychotherapist is setting up a support group for "bereaved" owners of "Tamagotchi" electronic pets. The pets "hatch" on a liquid-crystal screen on an egg-shaped plastic keyring. Owners have to play with, feed and clean up after the pets or they will die, turning into electronic angels. Dr Daniel de Souza, of Toronto, said "Caring for a Tamagotchi is like caring for a real creature, thus the death of one can be as mentally painful as losing a favourite pet dog or cat." (D Telegraph 23 May)

• DRACULA DRUBBING
An Edinburgh woman made her own unique contribution to the atmosphere of a ghost tour by attacking an actor with a stick. Pamela Wilkinson of Victoria Terrace had had enough of the screams of tourists outside her window, when an actor playing a ghost would leap out on walkers. In September, she finally cracked and struck Patrick Bankhead, who was dressed as Dracula at the time. When the tourists laughed, she attacked them and hit a woman on the leg. Wilkinson was fined £80 after admitting two assaults and struggling with police. She has since moved house, and Mr Bankhead is reported to have given up his job soon after the attack. (Times, 31 May)

COMPETITION

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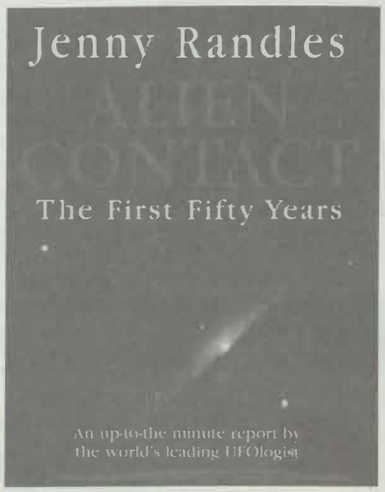

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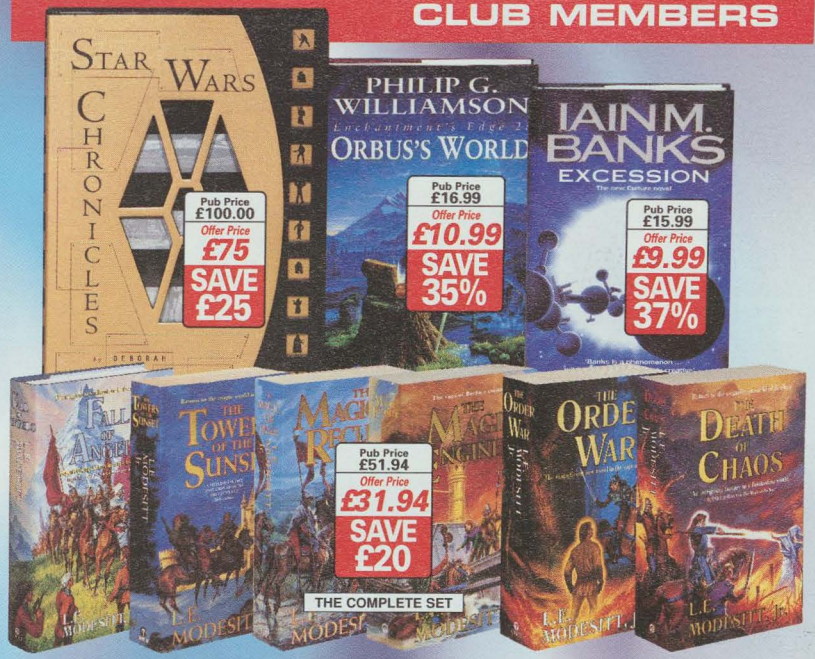

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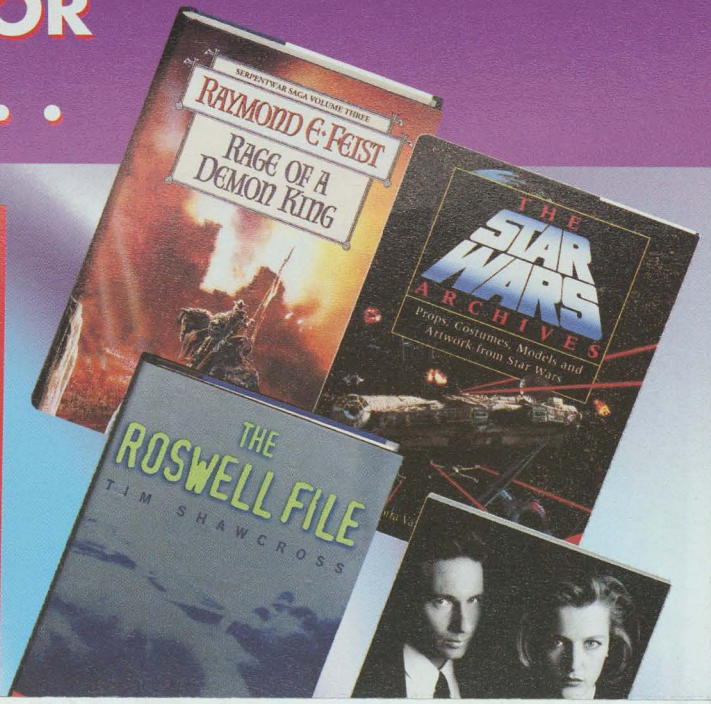

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